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A
R E V I E W
O F T H E
P R I N C I P A L Q U E S T I O N S

A N D
D I F F I C U L T I E S i n M O R A L S ;

P A R T I C U L A R L Y

Those relating to the ORIGINAL of our IDEAS
of VIRTUE, its NATURE, FOUNDATION,
REFERENCE to the DEITY, OBLIGATION,
SUBJECT-MATTER, and SANCTIONS.

By *RICHARD PRICE.*

Οὐ γὰρ ἔχω εὔρωγε ἄνεν ἔτι μοι ἐναργεῶς οὐ, ὡς τυλοῖ; το
ΕΙΝΑΙ ὡς οἶον τε μαλιστα ΚΑΛΟΝ τε καὶ ΑΓΑΘΟΝ.
Plat. in *Phædone*.

*In Homine autem summa omnis animi est; in animo, rationis;
ex qua VIRTUS est: Quæ rationis absolutio definitur.
Quæ etiam atque etiam explicanda putant.*

Cicero, *De finibus*, lib. v. 14.

VIRTUS — *omnium rerum domina. Ibid.*

L O N D O N :
Printed for A. MILLAR in the Strand.
MDCCLVII.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

P R E F A C E.

I Am very sensible, that the following work offers itself to the publick under many disadvantages, and at a time when it is not to be expected that it can gain much of the attention of men. So important, however, are the questions discussed in it, that if, amidst many imperfections, it has any merit, it cannot be unseasonable, but will probably find some, who will give it a candid and careful perusal. The Notes which will be found in it, were occasioned chiefly by its having lain by the Author for some years, and received in that time several revisals. — There is no writer to whom I have near so much reason to acknowledge myself indebted, as Dr. Butler, the late Bishop of Durham. But whenever I have been conscious of writing after him, I have al-

most always either mentioned him, or quoted his words; and the same I have also scrupulously done with respect to other writers.

There is nothing in this Treatise, which I wish more I could engage the reader's attention to, or which, I think, will require it more, than the first Chapter, and particularly the second Section of it. If I have failed here, I have failed in my chief design. But I should be sorry that any one should fix this as his judgment, without going through the whole treatise, and comparing the different parts of it, which will be found to have a considerable dependence on one another. The point which I have endeavoured to prove in the last section of the chapter I have mentioned, must appear so plain to those who have not much studied the question about the foundation of Morals, or who have not before viewed it in the light in which I have placed it, that, I fear, it will be difficult for them not
to

P R E F A C E.

v

to think that I have trifled in bestowing so much pains upon it. And indeed my own conviction is so strong on this point, that I cannot help considering it as some reproach to human reason, that, by the late controversies, and the doubts of some of the wisest men, it should be rendered necessary to use many arguments to shew, that right and wrong, or moral good and evil, signify somewhat really true of actions, and not merely sensations.

C O N-

ERRATA.

PAGE 46, second line of the Note, after *οὐτως* add *καὶ μὴ*. and in the third line dele *καὶ μὴ*.

Page 50, last line, for *and the*, read *and of the*.

Page 56, line 6th. for *to supreme*, read *to our supreme*.

Page 153, last line of the Note, for *ἴσως* read *ἴσῳ* and dele *cap. 9*.

Page 155, 8th line of the Note, for *δογμά* read *αὐτομά*.

Page 278, line 22, for *greater number*, read *great number*.

Page 287, line 2 of the Note, for *ῥαισδανάς* read *ῥαισδανάς*.

Page 330, first line of the Note, for *ὑπεραία* read *ὑπεραξία*.

Page 352, line 1, for *horror of*, read *horror at*.

Page 419, line 2, dele *well*.

Page 448, line 26, for *essentiat* read *essentially*.

Page 458, line 14, dele *and sufferings*.

Page 476, line 11, of the Note, for *Price* read *Prize*.

Page 477, line 20, for *on account of its worth*, read *is worth on account of its nature, &c.*

In **Pages** 202 and 220, for *Mr. Adams*, read *Dr. Adams*.

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INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

THERE cannot be an enquiry of more importance, than that which lies now before us. Investigations of the laws of nature, and the various mathematical and philosophical researches, which have employed the attention of men, are but of little consequence compared with it: for what can be more obvious than that it concerns us much more to be well acquainted with the true account, original and foundation of our ideas of virtue and morality, than with the true account or reasons of any effects and appearances in the natural world? It may indeed be truly said, that virtue is an *infinitely* more interesting and higher object of enquiry, than any in the material world, or the whole circle of the sciences. 'Tis from their subserviency to virtue, that all discoveries in these, and all improvements and qualities whatsoever, derive their greatest value. How extremely desirable then must it appear to us, to have the nature and foundation of it well explained and settled;

B

especially

especially if we consider in particular how closely connected with this, are the evidences which we have of the moral attributes of God.

It is one affecting instance of the imperfection of our present state and faculties, that on such a subject, wise and inquisitive men are far from being agreed, and that it lies yet involved in a good deal of obscurity and confusion.

I should be happy, could I be the means of contributing any thing towards removing this obscurity and confusion, towards fixing the true foundation of morals, and determining a controversy of so great importance. This is what I have aimed at in the following treatise; but what success I have met with, I leave others to judge.

The liberty which all readers take to pronounce concerning the merit of books, 'tis fit they should enjoy; nor is he sufficiently qualified for the province of writing, who finds himself at all disposed to be out of humour with it, or who is not prepared for all its consequences. It is however much to be wished, that men would, before they pronounce, take more time and pains to consider and examine, than they generally do. There are hardly any subjects

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jects so common and obvious, as not to require a good deal of care and attention to form any competent judgment of them: what then must we think of those whom we continually see so readily delivering their sentiments of things they have never considered, and deciding peremptorily, without thought or study, on the most difficult questions? If such are ever right, it can be only by chance; they speak and think entirely at random, and therefore deserve no attention or regard. But it is melancholy to observe so many, even of those who take some time and pains to examine, almost as little entitled to regard, and as incompetent judges, as the most careless and unthinking; determined in their judgments by circumstances the most trifling, and considerations the most foreign to the purpose, and wholly under the influence of passions and desires the most unfavourable to the discovery of truth.

These things afford but a discouraging prospect to writers in general, especially those who write on any abstracted and controverted subjects. So great is the inattention of men, their carelessness and haste in thinking, and yet forwardness to determine, and so much do they like or dislike according to their pre-conceived notions and prejudices, and not according to

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reason, or upon any close and impartial consideration, that an author who should entertain any sanguine hopes of success, whatever he might think of his cause or his arguments, would, in all probability, be sufficiently mortified. It might be added, that we are, in general, no less inclined to attach ourselves immoderately, and beyond all that the evidence we have will warrant, to our opinions; than we are to embrace them before due examination, and to decide prematurely and capriciously.

I have, for my own part, such a notion of the truth of these observations, that there are not perhaps many who less expect to be able to convince one person of a single error, who has already attached himself to a party, and formed his opinions. The more we know of men, the more we find to what a lamentable degree they are governed, in forming and maintaining their opinions, by their tempers, by interest, by humour, and passion, and a thousand nameless causes, and particular turns and casts of mind, which cannot but produce the greatest diversity of sentiments among them, and render it impossible for them not to err. There are in truth none who are possessed of that cool and dispassionate temper, that freedom

INTRODUCTION. 5

dom from all wrong byasses, that habit of attention and patience of thought, and, withal, that penetration and sagacity of mind, which are the necessary securities against error, and the requisite qualifications for finding out truth. How much then do modesty and diffidence become us? how open ought we to be to conviction, and how candid to those of different sentiments? Indeed the consideration of the various ways, in which error may insinuate itself into our minds; the many latent prejudices, by which we are liable to be influenced and perverted, and which it is scarcely possible for us wholly to remove, or even to find out; the innumerable circumstances in our own dispositions, and in the appearances of things which may insensibly draw us astray, and the unavoidable darkness and infirmities of the best and ablest men, shewing themselves frequently in mistakes of the strangest kind: such reflections are enough sometimes to dispose a considerate man to distrust almost all his opinions.

But yet, to indulge such a disposition, would be very unreasonable. Notwithstanding these difficulties and discouragements, truth is still discoverable, and the honest and diligent may expect (at least in some measure, and on the most important points) to succeed in their en-

6 INTRODUCTION.

quiries after it. These reflexions afford the strongest arguments for caution and care in enquiring, but none for despair or a desultory levity and fickleness of sentiment. They ought not to make us sceptical, though they demonstrate the folly of being positive and dogmatical.

What is to be expected in this treatise, the reader must already be in general apprized of. Most of the questions that are of any importance relating to morality and virtue, will be here considered, and many of them in a manner somewhat different from that in which they have been hitherto treated. And tho' the author imagines he has said some things that may throw light on several important truths, yet it is with real diffidence that he offers this work to the public, sensible of several defects in it, which he knows not how to remove, and conscious of his own liableness to the causes of blindness and error before-mentioned. Some material difficulties, possibly, that may occur to others on the subjects he has considered, may have escaped his notice; and others he may not have sufficiently cleared; and, indeed, whoever believes he has an absolutely complete view of any subject, or that he can clear it of all difficulties, must possess a very narrow mind, and
have

INTRODUCTION. 7'

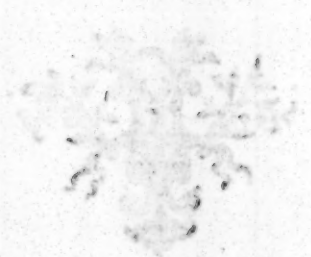
have examined things very loosely and imperfectly.

What I have had chiefly in view, has been to trace virtue up to truth, and the natures of things, and these to the Deity. If I have succeeded in this, I shall not be much concerned, in what else, of less consequence, I have been unsuccessful. It may be proper to inform those, who have not been conversant with some authors frequently referred to, or who are not much acquainted with the present state of the controversies relating to morality, that they will find some things here, which may probably seem *strange* to them, though nothing, I hope, that will be necessarily unintelligible.



INTRODUCTION

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With this... and the...
to take... to take...
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A

T R E A T I S E

O F

Moral Good and Evil.

C H A P. I.

*Of the Original of our Ideas of Right
and Wrong.*

IN considering the actions of moral agents, we shall, I think, find in ourselves three different perceptions relating to them, which it is necessary we should carefully distinguish.

The *first*, is our perception of right and wrong.

The *second*, is our perception of beauty and amiableness, or the contrary. That these, as I understand them, however connected, are very different, will appear hereafter.

The *third* perception of our minds, relating to actions, we express, when we say, they are of *good* or *ill* desert. Each of these I propose separately to examine, but particularly the *first*, with which I shall begin. It is proper the reader should carefully attend to the state of the question here to be considered; which as clearly and fully as I can, I shall lay before him.

S E C T.

S E C T. I.

The question stated concerning the Foundation of Morals.

SOME actions we all feel ourselves irresistibly determined to approve, and others to disapprove. Some actions we cannot but conceive of as *right*, and others as *wrong*, and of all actions we are led to form some idea, as either *fit* to be performed or *unfit*, or neither fit nor unfit to be performed; that is, *indifferent*. What this power within us is, that thus perceives and determines about actions, is the question to be considered.

A late author, of great abilities and worth, Dr. *Hutcheson*, whose sentiments on this subject have been very much followed, deduces all our moral ideas from a *moral sense*; plainly meaning by this a power of perception distinct from reason, or a principle planted in our minds rendering certain actions and characters necessarily pleasing, and others displeasing to us, which is entirely arbitrary and factitious in its nature. Thus, according to this writer, as we are so made, that certain impressions on our bodily organs shall excite certain ideas in our minds, or that certain outward forms, when presented

to us, shall be the necessary occasions of pleasure or pain to us: In like manner we are so made, that certain affections and actions of moral agents, when considered by us, shall be the immediate and necessary occasions of agreeable or disagreeable perceptions; or procure our love or dislike of them. He has indeed well shewn, that we have a faculty determining us *immediately* to approve or disapprove of actions, abstracted from all views of private advantage; and that the highest pleasures of life depend upon this faculty. Had he proceeded no farther than this, and intended nothing more by the *moral sense*, than our *moral faculty* in general, without determining what it is; little room would have been left for any objections; but then it would have denoted no more than a well-known and acknowledged fact*, and there-

* In his Preface to his *Treatise on the Passions*, he tells us; after taking notice of some gentlemen, who, by what he had writ, had been convinced of a *moral sense*; that they had made him a *compliment which he did not think belonged to him, as if the world were indebted to him for the discovery of it*. 'Tis not easy to determine what the discovery here mentioned can be. If by the moral sense is meant only a moral approving and disapproving power in general, or the determination we feel to approve some actions and characters, and condemn others, this has always been known, and signifies no more than what is

fore nothing at all new or peculiar; from which consideration, and also from the term *sense* applied by him to this faculty, in common with our outward senses; from his rejecting all the arguments that have been used to prove it to be the same with reason, and from the whole of his language and reasonings on this subject; it is evident, he considered it as the effect of a *positive constitution* of our minds, or as a relish *given* them for certain moral objects and forms and aversion for others, similar to the relishes and aversions given us for particular objects of the external and internal senses. In other words; our ideas of morality, if this writer is right, have the same original with our ideas of the sensible qualities of bodies, the harmony of sounds †, or the beauties of painting or sculpture; that is, the mere good-pleasure of our Maker adapting the mind and its organs in a particular manner to certain objects. Virtue (as the Gentlemen who embrace

commonly expressed by the word *conscience*. If it means an arbitrary and implanted power, to which all our ideas of moral good and evil are to be ascribed, I believe this, in the end, will be found not to be the truth.

† If any one wants to be convinced, that this is a just representation of Dr. *Hutcheson's* sentiments, he need only read his *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, and particularly the 4th section at the conclusion. See also a *Note* at the end of the first of Mr. *Hume's Philosophical Essays*.

this

this scheme frequently say) is a mere affair of taste. Moral right and wrong, according to their account of them, signify nothing *in the objects themselves* to which they are applied, any more than agreeable and harsh; sweet and bitter; pleasant and painful; but only *certain effects in us*. Our perception of *right*, or moral good, in actions, is that agreeable *emotion*, or feeling, which certain actions produce in us; and of *wrong*, or moral evil, the contrary. They are particular modifications of our minds, or impressions which they are made to receive from the contemplation of certain actions, which the contrary actions might have occasioned, had the Author of nature so pleased; and which to suppose to belong to these actions themselves, is as absurd as to ascribe the pleasure or uneasiness, which the observation of a particular form gives us, to the form itself. 'Tis therefore by this account, improper to say of an action, that it *is* right, in much the same sense that it is improper to say of an object of sight, that it is *coloured*, or of an object of taste, that it is *sweet*.

The present enquiry then is; whether this be a true account of virtue, or not; or whether it *has* or has *not* a foundation in the *nature*

ture of its object; whether *right* and *wrong* are real qualities of *actions*, or only of *our minds*, and denote what actions *are*, or only *sensations* depending on the particular frame and structure of our natures.

I am persuaded, all attentive persons, who have not before considered this point, will immediately determine for themselves; wonder how this should be a subject of dispute, and think I am going to undertake a very needless work. Nor does it indeed seem easy for any person, whose thoughts are yet free and unprepossessed, to be at any loss what to decide upon a general view of the question. However, it is undoubtedly a very important question, and well worthy our particular examination and study. What I have represented, is, I think, the naked and just state of it. And it is worth our attention, as we go along, that it is the *only* question about the foundation of morals, that can rationally and properly be made a subject of debate. For, granting that we have real and distinct perceptions of *moral right* and *wrong*, they must denote, either what the actions, to which we apply them, *are*, or only our *feelings*; and agreeably to this the *power* of perceiving them must be, either that power whose
object

object is truth, or some *implanted power* or *sense*. There can be no medium between these different hypotheses. If the former is true, then is *morality* a thing equally steady, independent, and unchangeable with *all truth*: If, on the contrary, the latter is true, then is it that, and no other, which, according to the different constitutions of the *senses* of beings, it *appears* to be to them; it has no other measure or *standard*, besides every one's private structure of mind and sensations.

As to the schemes which found morality on self-love; on positive laws and compacts, or the Divine will; they must either mean, that moral good and evil are only other words for *advantageous* and *disadvantageous*, *willed* and *forbidden*, and thus are mere names signifying nothing distinct and positive: Or they relate to a very different question; that is, not to the question, what is the nature and true account of virtue; but, what is the subject matter of it, or what are the heads and first principles of it? *

* If any one would better understand this, let him just cast his eye over what is said at the beginning of the last chapter 2^d Part. Or let him consider, that the phrase *foundation* of virtue, having, as there shewn, the different significations of an account or original of virtue; of a con-

As far as the former may be the intention of the schemes I have mentioned, they afford little room for controversy. Right and wrong do not signify merely such actions as are willed or forbidden, or that will produce good or harm; but our approbation or disapprobation of obeying or disobeying will, and producing happiness or misery, or some perception, idea, or sentiment in our minds concerning these. This is very plain; for it would otherwise be palpably absurd in any case to ask, whether it is *right* to obey a command, or *wrong* to disobey it; and the propositions, *obeying a command is right*, or *producing happiness is right*, would be most triflingly identical, as expressing no more than that obeying a command is obeying a command, or producing happiness is producing happiness. Besides, on this supposition, that right and wrong denote only the relations of actions to will and law, or to happiness and misery, there could be no dispute about the faculty that perceives right and wrong, since it must be owned by all, that these relations are objects of the investigations of reason, or that this is the faculty, which must

sideration or principle inferring and proving it in particular cases; and of a motive to the practice of it: It means in this place the former only.

find

find out what is, or is not conformable to will, and that judges of the tendencies of actions and their effects on public and private good.

Happiness and misery require something in their own nature, or in ours, to give them influence, and determine our desires of them, and approbation of pursuing them. And in like manner all laws, will, and compacts suppose *antecedent right* to give them force effect and obligation; and therefore, instead of being the constituents and foundations of *right*, they are *themselves* evidently founded upon it. These things will appear more fully in the sequel of this work.

Taking it then for granted, that right and wrong are, in the sense now explained, more than arbitrary, external denominations; or names absolutely synonymous with useful and hurtful, commanded and forbidden; and therefore that we have a power or faculty within us distinctly perceiving them; the question before proposed, returns; —What is this power? — My answer is; that it is the *Understanding*.

This assertion, if it can be properly supported and proved, will sufficiently decide the whole controversy now stated, concerning the original and foundation of morals. In attempting which, it will be requisite to premise several

veral things relating to the original of our ideas in general, and the distinct provinces of the *understanding* and of *sense*.

S E C T. II.

Of the Original of our Ideas in general. And, particularly, of the Understanding, wherein it differs from Sense, and how far it is concerned in supplying us with Ideas.

Sensation and Reflexion have been commonly reckoned the sources of all our ideas; and Mr. *Locke* has taken no small pains to prove this. How much soever, on the whole, I admire his excellent *Essay*, I cannot think him sufficiently clear or explicit on this head. It is hard to tell what were his precise ideas of sensation and reflexion, and how much he included in them. If by *sensation* we understand the effects arising from the impressions made on our minds by external objects; and by *reflexion* the notice the mind takes of its own operations; it will be impossible to derive some of the most important of our ideas from them. It is thus Mr. *Locke* defines them
in

in the beginning of his book; but we may find probably upon considering the different things he has said on this subject, and particularly how much he ascribes to the operations of the mind about its ideas, that what he chiefly meant, was, that all our ideas are either derived *immediately* from these two sources, or ultimately grounded upon ideas so derived; or, in other words, that they furnish us with all the subjects, materials, and occasions of knowledge, thought, comparison, and internal perception. This, however, is very different from their being properly the sources of all our ideas, as he so often calls them: nor indeed does it appear, notwithstanding all he has said of the operations of the mind about its ideas; that he thought there was any faculty of perception in the mind that could give rise to any *simple ideas*, not received immediately from the aforesaid springs; or that it had any powers that could do any thing more than produce various compositions and new modifications of them. But be these things as they will, what I am going to observe, will, I fancy, be found true.

That the power within us that *understands*; the *Intuition* of the mind, or the faculty in it that discerns *truth*, that views, compares, and

judges of all ideas and things ; is a spring of new ideas *.

As, perhaps, this has not been enough attended to ; and as the question to be determined, is ; whether our *moral ideas* arise from hence, or from a *Sense* ; it will be proper to enter into a particular examination of it, and distinctly to consider the different natures and

* The reader is desired to remember that by *ideas*, I mean here almost constantly *simple ideas*, or original, primary, and uncompounded perceptions of the mind. That our ideas of right and wrong are of this sort, will be particularly observed hereafter. It may also be right to take notice, that I all along speak of the understanding, in the most confined and proper sense of it, as above explained, and distinguished from the powers of sensation. What gives occasion for putting the reader in mind of this, is the division which has been made by some writers, of all the powers of the soul into understanding and will ; the former comprehending under it, all the powers of external and internal sensation, as well as those of judging and reasoning ; and the latter, all the affections of the mind, as well as the power of acting and determining.

There may be further some occasion for observing distinctly, that the two acts of the understanding, as it is here taken, being intuition and deduction, I have in view the former. 'Tis plain, on the contrary, that those writers, who argue against referring our moral ideas to reason, have generally the latter in view. What they say at least holds only against this ; nor do they seem to have sufficiently attended to the influence, nature, and extent of the faculty of intuition. I shall again have occasion to observe these things more particularly ; but it seems proper to prevent all danger of mistake and confusion as we go along, to hint them here.

provinces

provinces of sense and reason ; the different concern they have in supplying us with ideas, and the superiority of the one to the other.

To this purpose we may observe, first, that what judges concerning the objects and perceptions of the senses, and contradicts their decisions, cannot be itself sense, but must be some nobler faculty : or that what discovers the nature of the sensible qualities of things ; enquires into the causes of sensible perceptions, and distinguishes between what is *real* and *phantastical* in them, must be a power within us which is superior to sense.

Again, it is plain that one sense cannot judge of the objects of another ; the eye, for instance, of harmony, or the ear of colours. That therefore which views and compares the objects of *all* the senses, and judges of them, cannot be sense, or any power that has any affinity to it. Thus, when we consider sound and colour together, and observe in them essence, number, identity, diversity, &c. and determine their reality to consist, not in being properties of *external substances*, but of *our souls* ; this must be done by a sharper eye than that of sense. What takes cognizance of these things, and gives rise to these notions, must be a faculty capable of

subjecting all things alike to its inspection, and of acquainting itself with, and of contemplating necessary truth and existence.

Sense consists in the obtruding of certain impressions and ideas upon us, independently of our wills; but it cannot perceive what they are, or whence they are derived. It lies prostrate under its object, and is only a capacity in the soul of feeling, and suffering, or of having its own state altered by the influence of particular causes. It must therefore remain a stranger to the objects and causes affecting it, and cannot *know* any thing, or *judge* at all, even of its own perceptions. But the *understanding* masters and comprehends its object, takes cognizance of it within itself, and, by its own native power and activity, examines it, and *judges* of it.

Were not *sense* and *knowledge* entirely different, we should rest satisfied with sensible ideas, such as light, colours, and sounds, and enquire no farther about them, at least when the impressions are strong and vigorous: Whereas, on the contrary, we necessarily desire some farther acquaintance with them, and can never be satisfied till we have subjected them to the force and survey of reason. — In sensible perceptions it is the lower, instinctive, and

and passive part of the soul as embodied, that is chiefly concerned; but, in intellectual perceptions, the soul acts more by itself, and separately from matter. — Sense presents particular forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any general ideas. It is the intellect that examines and compares the presented forms, that rises above individuals, to universal and abstract ideas; and thus looks downwards upon things, takes in at one view an infinity of particulars, and is rendered capable of discovering general truths. — Sense sees only the *outside* of things, reason acquaints itself with their *natures*. — Sensation is only a mode of feeling in the mind, or an affection forced upon it from without; but knowledge implies an *active*, vital energy of the mind exerted about intellectual objects, whereby they are understood, and satisfactorily comprehended. Feeling pain, for example, is the effect of sense; but the understanding is employed when pain itself is made an object of the mind's reflexion, or held up before it, in order to observe its nature, subject and causes.

Mere sense can perceive nothing in the most exquisite work of art; suppose a plant, or the body of an animal; but what is painted in the eye, or what might be described on paper. It is

the intellect that must perceive in it order and proportion; variety and regularity; design, connection, art, and power; aptitudes, dependencies, correspondencies, and adjustment of parts, so as to subserve one end, and compose one perfect whole *; things which can never

* See Dr. Cudworth's *Treatise of eternal and immutable morality*, Book IV. Chap. 2. where he observes, that the mind perceives, by occasion of outward objects, as much more than is represented to it by sense, as a learned man does in the best written book, than an illiterate person or brute. To the eyes of both the same characters and delineations will appear; but the learned man in those characters (to use the author's own words) "will see heaven, " earth, sun, and stars; read profound theorems of philosophy or geometry; learn a great deal of new knowledge from them, and admire the wisdom of the composer: While to the other nothing appears but black strokes drawn on white paper. The reason of which is, that the mind of the one is furnished with certain, " previous, inward anticipations, ideas, and instruction, " that the other wants. — In the room of this book of " human composition, let us now (adds he) substitute the " book of nature, written all over with the characters and " impressions of *divine* wisdom and goodness, but legible " only to an intellectual eye; for to the sense both of " man and brute, there appears nothing else in it, but as " in the other, so many inky scrawls; *i. e.* nothing but " figures and colours: But to the mind, which hath a participation of the divine wisdom that made it, and being " printed all over with the same archetypal seal, upon occasion of those sensible delineations, and taking notice " of whatsoever is cognate to it, exerting its own inward " activity from thence; will have not only a wonderful " scene, and large prospects of other thoughts laid open

be

be represented on a sensible organ, and the ideas of which cannot be stamped on the mind from external objects, or passively received from without. — Sense cannot perceive any of the modes of thinking beings; these can be discovered only by the mind's survey of itself.

In a word, it appears that the objects, employment, offices, and very notion of sense and understanding are, in all respects, different: the one conversant only about *particulars*; the other about *universals*: The one being incapable of determining any thing about truth or real existence; and the other employed entirely about this: The one not *discerning*, but *suffering*, and signifying most properly a mode of pleasure, or pain, or of consciousness involuntarily produced in the soul; the other, not properly *suffering*, but *discerning*, and signifying the soul's *Power* of surveying and examining all objects, ideas, and things, and of taking notice of their reality, relations, and natures; which *Power*, perhaps, can hardly be better defined,

“ before it, and variety of knowledge, logical, mathematical, and moral display'd; but also clearly read the divine wisdom and goodness in every page of this great volume, as it were written in large and legible characters.”

than

than by calling it, in *Plato's* language, that in the soul to which belongs *κατάληψις τῆ ὀν* Ⓢ, or the apprehension of what absolutely IS, or IS NOT.†

But, in order farther to shew how little a way mere sense, and let me add *imagination* (a faculty nearly allied to *sense*) can go, and how far we are dependent on our higher reasonable powers for many of our most obvious and fundamental ideas; I would instance in the following particulars.

Solidity has generally passed for an idea we owe to sense; and yet perhaps it would be difficult to prove, that we ever had actual experience of that *impenetrability*, which we include in the idea of it, and consider as essential to all bodies. In order to this, we must be sure, that we have, some time or other, made two bodies really touch, and found that they would not penetrate one another: But it is not impossible to account for all the facts we observe, without supposing, in any case, *absolute contact* between bodies. And though we could even make the experiment I have mentioned; yet one experiment, or a

† The above observations concerning the difference between sense and knowledge, are, I think, just and proper; and several of them may be found in *Plato's Thætetus*; or more amply insisted on in the last quoted treatise.

million, could be no sufficient foundation for the universal and absolute conclusion we have formed. Not to add, that all that would appear to the senses in such experiments, would be the *conjunction* of two events, not their *necessary connexion*. Are we then to affirm, that there is no idea of *impenetrability*; that two particles of matter, continuing distinct, and without annihilation of either, may occupy the same place, and all the atoms of matter in the universe be crowded into the room and bulk of one, and these, for the same reason, into room still less and less, 'till at last (without, in the mean while, diminishing the quantity of matter) all must vanish? This, indeed, might be the consequence, were it certain that all our ideas, on this subject, are supplied from *sensation*; and did nothing further than it acquaints us with, appear to reason. There are many instances in which two material substances apparently run into one another. It is reason, that, from its own ideas and principles, determines such to be fallacious appearances, and perceives the universal and strict necessity of the contrary. The same power, that perceives two particles to be *different*, perceives them to be *impenetrable*; for they are as necessarily the one as the other; it

it being self-evident, that they cannot occupy the same place without losing all difference.

Again, what is meant by the *vis inertiae*, or inactivity of matter, is rather a perception of reason, than an idea conveyed to the mind by sense. This property of matter is the foundation of all our reasoning about it: And those who reject it, or who will allow no other source of our knowledge of matter and motion, besides *experience*, or the information conveyed to the mind through the senses, would do well to consider, whether the three axioms, or laws of motion, with which Sir *Isaac Newton* begins his philosophy, and upon which it is built, are not quite without evidence and meaning. — What is it acquaints us, that every body will for ever continue in the state of rest or motion it is in, unless something produces an alteration of that state; that every alteration of its motion must be proportionable to the force impressed, and in the same line of direction; and that its action upon another, and the action of that other upon it, are always equal and contrary? In other words; what furnishes us with our ideas of resistance and inactivity? — Not *experience*: for never did any man yet see any portion of matter that was void of *gravity*, and many other active powers,

ers; or that would not immediately quit its state of rest, and begin to move; and also lose or acquire motion after the impressing of new force upon it, without any *visible* or *discoverable* cause. Ideas so contradictory to sense; conclusions so opposed by never-failing experience, cannot be derived from them. they must therefore be ascribed to a higher original.

But though we should suppose them the subjects of constant *experience*, as well as the determinations of *reason*; yet, as discovered by the former, they must be very different from what they are, as apprehended by the latter. It is not possible they should be the subjects of sensible observation in the sense, and manner, and degree of accuracy, in which we perceive and believe them. Though, for instance, *experience* taught us always, that the alteration of motion in a body, is proportionable to the impressed force, and made in the line of direction in which this force acts; yet it can teach us this but very imperfectly; it cannot inform us of it with precision and exactness: It can only shew us, that it is so *nearly*; which, strictly speaking, is the same with not being so at all. The eye of sense is blunt; the conceptions of the imagination rude

and gross, falling *infinitely* short of that certainty, accuracy, universality, and clearness, which belong to *intellectual discernment*.

The idea of *substance*, likewise, is an idea which our minds are necessarily carried to, beyond what mere sensation furnishes them with; which can shew us nothing but accidents, sensible qualities, and the outsides of things. 'Tis the understanding that discovers the general distinction between substance and accident; nor can any perception be more easy, natural, and unavoidable, than that motion implies *something* that moves; *extension*, something *extended*; and, in general, *modes* something *modified*.

The idea of *Duration*, is an idea accompanying all our ideas, and included in every notion we can frame of reality and existence. What the observation of the train of thoughts following one another in our minds, or the constant flux of external things, immediately and properly suggests to us, is *succession*; an idea which, in common with all others, presupposes that of *duration*; but is as different from it as the idea of motion, or figure. It would, I think, have been much properer to have said, that the reflexion on the succession of ideas in our minds, is that by which we estimate the *quantity* of duration intervening
between

between two periods, or events; than, that it is what gave us the original idea.

Observations to the same purpose might be made concerning *Space*. This, as well as duration, is included in every reflexion we can make on our own existence, or that of other things; it being self-evidently the same with *denying* the existence of a thing, to say, that it has *never*, and *no-where* existed. We, and all things, exist in *time* and *place*, and therefore as self-conscious and intelligent beings, we must have ideas of them.

What may be farther worth observing concerning space and duration, is, that we perceive intuitively their *necessary existence*. The very notion of annihilation, or non-existence, being the removal of a thing from space and duration; to suppose these themselves annihilated, would be to suppose their separation from themselves. In the same intuitive manner we perceive they can have no *bounds*, and thus acquire the idea of *Infinity*. The very notion of *bounds* implies them, and therefore cannot be applicable to them, unless they could be bounded by themselves *. These perceptions are plainly the

* It is also in the same manner we perceive the parts of space to be immoveable and inseparable. *Ut partium*

notice the understanding takes of necessary truth ; and the same account exactly is to be given, how we come by our ideas of *infinity* and *necessity* in *time* and *space*, (and we may add in abstract truth and power) as, how we come by our ideas of any other self-evident reality ; of the *equality*, for instance, between the opposite angles of two lines crossing one another, or of the *identity* of any particular object while it continues to exist.

There are other objects, which the same faculty, with equal evidence, perceives to be *contingent* ; or whose actual existence it sees to be not *necessary*, but only *possible*. And of this also the same account is to be given, as why at the same time that we perceive the equality between the opposite angles of two lines crossing one another to be necessary, we perceive the quantity of motion in two bodies to be not *necessarily* equal, but only *possible* to be equal.

Thus, the Understanding, by employing its attention about different things, and observing what is, or is not *true* of them, acquires the different ideas of necessity, infinity, contingency, possibility, and impossibility.

temporis ordo est immutabilis, sic etiam ordo partium spatii. Moveantur hæ de locis suis, & movebuntur (ut ita dicam) a seipsis. Newt. Princip.

The

The next ideas I shall instance in, as derived from the same source, are those of *Power* and *Causation*. Some of the ideas already mentioned imply them; but they require our particular notice and attention. Nothing may, at first sight, seem more obvious, than that one way in which they are conveyed to the mind, is by observing the various changes that happen about us; and our constant experience of the events arising upon such and such applications of external things to one another: And yet I am well persuaded, that this experience and observation are alone quite incapable of supplying us with these ideas.

What we observe by our external senses, is properly no more than that one thing *follows* another*, or the *constant conjunction* of certain events; as of the melting of wax, with placing it in the flame of a candle; and, in general, of such and such alterations in the qualities of bodies, with such and such circumstan-

* Several things to this purpose are said by *Malebranche*, who ('tis well known) has maintained, that nothing in nature is ever the proper *cause* or *efficient* of another, but only the *occasion*; the Deity, according to him, being the sole agent in all effects and events. But Mr. *Hume* has more particularly insisted on the observation here made, with a very different view. See *Phil. Essays*.

ces of their situation. That one thing is the *cause* of another, or *produces* it, by its own efficacy and operation, we never see: Nor is it indeed true, in numberless instances where men commonly think they observe it; and were it in no one instance true; I mean, were there no object in the world that contributed, by its own proper force, to the production of any new event; were the apparent causes of things universally only their *occasions* or *concomitants*; (which is nearly the real case, according to some philosophical principles;) yet still we should have the same ideas of cause, and effect, and power: nor could we possibly be the more at a loss for them. Our certainty that every new event requires some cause, depends not at all on experience; no more than our certainty of any other the most obvious subject of intuition. In the idea of every change is included that of its being an *effect*.

The necessity of a cause of whatever events arise, is an essential principle, a primary perception of the understanding; nothing being more clearly absurd and contradictory, than the notion of a change without a *changer*; something *altering* without *being altered*, or
begin-

beginning to exist without being produced; of a body, for instance, receiving an alteration of its form, and yet receiving it from nothing; ceasing to move, but not *stopped*; or beginning to move, at the same time that it neither moves itself, nor is moved by any thing. I know nothing that can be said or done to a person, who professes to deny these things, besides referring him to common sense and reason, and his own ideas. If he cannot find them there, he is not farther to be argued with, for the subject will not admit of argument; there being nothing clearer than the point itself disputed to be brought to confirm it. And he that acknowledgins we have such perceptions, will say they are to be ascribed to a different power from the understanding, should inform us why the same should not be asserted of all self-evident truth and impossibility †.

† The Author of the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, has insisted much on *feeling*, as the original of these, and many of our other general sentiments and ideas. It is impossible to say what he means by this word, as he generally uses it: But we are expressly told, it signifies no kind of intellectual perception; and that though it informs us, that nothing begins to be without a cause, and that whatever wisdom and perfection appear in the effect, exist, in a higher degree, in the cause; we discern nothing in the contrary suppositions impossible or contradictory to the natures of things: So that, for aught

It should be observed, that I have not said that we have no idea of power, but what we receive from the understanding. Activity, life, and self-determination are as essential to spirit, as the contrary are to matter; and therefore inward consciousness gives us the idea of that particular sort of energy or power which they imply. But the universal source of the idea of power, as we conceive it necessary to all new productions, and of our notions of influence, connexion, aptitude, and dependence in general, must be the faculty of understanding. Some active or passive powers, some *capacity*, or

we know, something *might* have arisen from nothing without any cause, and all the order and beauty we see in the frame of things be produced by a blind and unintelligible agent, or any the most inadequate cause. Why then, since it appears not to us but that these things are possible, do we believe that they have not actually happened? What is the meaning of saying, we have a feeling of the contrary? Is it not on account of the apprehended *impossibility* of these things, and their obvious inconsistency with the principles of reason, and the natures of things, that they have been hitherto universally rejected? — In short, either there is in the nature of things some *necessity* of a cause adequate and proportionate to every alteration, and every effect; or there is not. If it is affirmed, there is not; without farther pointing out the consequences, I shall only ask, whether it is not reason that determines thus? If there is; why should not the understanding be capable of perceiving it; especially if it may perceive the contrary? Or how can we doubt but that it actually does perceive it?

possibi-

possibility of *receiving* changes, or *producing* them, make an essential part of our ideas of all objects: And these powers differ according to the different natures of the objects, and their different qualities and relations to one another. What can *do* nothing, what is fitted to answer no purpose, and has no kind of dependence, aptitude, or power belonging to it, can be nothing real or substantial, but a mere shadow. Were all things wholly unconnected, loose, and detached from one another; and did no one event, idea, or object, in any circumstances imply any thing, or carry the mind to any thing beyond itself; all the foundations of *natural* knowledge, and of almost *all* knowledge, would be destroyed. It is, on all hands, confessed, that things appear otherwise to us, and that in numberless instances we are under a necessity of considering them as connected, and of inferring one thing from another. Why should this be imputed to any thing besides a *real* connexion between the things themselves? Is it possible any one should think, that there is no sort of real connexion, by which, antecedently to habit, we could infer the one from the other; between probity of mind and just actions, or between certain impulses of bodies on one another, and an alteration of their mo-

tions? These connexions are indeed essentially different, but alike real; and it is not less reasonable to deny them, or to deny, that it is reason perceives them, than to deny in like manner the connexion between the continual approach of two bodies, or lines, and their meeting at last.

Indeed, the whole meaning of *accounting* for a fact, is derived from what is now asserted, or supposes something in the nature of objects and events that includes a connexion between them, or a fitness in certain ways to influence one another. 'Till we can discover this, we are always conscious of somewhat farther to be known. While we only see one thing constantly attending, or following another, without perceiving the real dependence and connexion; without being able to trace the event to its ultimate reason and foundation, (as in the case of gravitation, and the sensations attending certain impressions on our bodily organs) we are necessarily dissatisfied, and feel a state of mind very different from that entire acquiescence, which we experience upon considering, for example, Sir *Isaac Newton's* laws of motion, or any other instances and facts, in which we see the necessary connexion and truth.

Agree-

Agreeably to the past observations we always find, that when we have adequate ideas of the natures and properties of any beings, or objects, we at the same time perceive their *powers*, and can foretel, independently of experience, what they will produce in given circumstances, and what will follow upon such and such applications of them to one another. Were we thoroughly acquainted with the heart of a man, the turn of his temper, and the make and principles of his mind, we should never want experience to inform us, what he will do, or how far he is to be trusted. In like manner, did we know the inward fabrick and constitution of the bodies surrounding us, and on which all their properties and powers depend, we should know before-hand what would be the success of any experiments we could make with them: Just as from having a complete idea of the real essence of a circle, we can deduce the several properties of it depending on this essence, or determine what will be the proportion of any lines and angles drawn, after certain manners, in it. And, had we a perfect insight into the constitution of nature, the laws that govern it, and the motions, texture, and relations of the several bodies, great and small, that compose

it; the whole chain of future events in it would be laid open to us. *Experience* and observation are only of use, when we are ignorant of the nature of the object, and cannot, in a more perfect, short, and certain way, determine what will be the event in particular cases, and what are the uses of particular, sensible objects*. *Instinct* is a still lower and

* The conviction produced by experience is built on the same principle, with that which assures us, that there must be a cause of every event, or some account of whatever happens. The frequent repetition of a particular event, as of the falling of a heavy body, when nothing supports it; produces an expectation of its happening again on future trials: Because we see intuitively, that there being some reason or cause of this *constancy of event*, it must be derived from causes regularly and constantly operating in given circumstances. In the very same manner, and upon the same principles, we should conclude upon observing a particular number on a dye, thrown very often without one failure, that it would be thrown also upon a succeeding trial: And the more frequently and uninterruptedly we knew this had happened, the stronger would be our expectation of its happening again, because the more evident would it be, that either all the sides of the dye were marked with the same number, or that some art was used in throwing it, or that there was something in the constitution of it that disposed it to turn up this particular side, rather than any other. — However strange it may appear, it is probably true, that what occasions the doubts and difficulties which are raised about this, and some other things of the clearest nature, is their being self-evident; and that what is meant by saying, that it is not reason that informs us, that there must be some account of whatever comes to pass, some

more

more imperfect means of supplying the same defect of knowledge.

With respect to all the ideas now mentioned, particularly the last, it is worth observing, that were it as difficult to find out what is their true original, as it is to deduce them from the common sources explained by writers on these subjects, it would surely be exceeding unreasonable from hence to conclude, that we have no such ideas. And yet this is the very conclusion some have drawn*. If then we indeed have such ideas, and if, besides, they have a foundation in truth, and represent somewhat really existing correspondent to them, what difficulty can there be in granting they may be apprehended by that faculty, whose natural object is truth? But if we have no such ideas, or if they represent nothing real, besides the qualities of our own minds; I need not say what follows, or into what an abyss of scepticism we are plunged.

established causes of constant and uniform events, or that order and regularity can proceed only from design; must be; that they are not subjects of *deduction*, or that they are so plain, that there is nothing plainer from which they can be *inferred*.

* See *Philosophical Essays*, p. 104, &c.

Let

Let me add, in the last place, that our *abstract ideas* seem most properly to belong to the understanding ; and ought chiefly to be referred to it. They are, undoubtedly, essential to all its operations ; every act of judgment implying some abstract, or universal idea. Were they formed by the mind in the manner generally represented, it seems unavoidable to conceive, that it *has* them at the very time that it is supposed to be employed in *forming* them. Thus from any particular idea of a triangle, it is said, we can frame the general one ; but does not the very reflexion said to be necessary to this, on a greater or lesser triangle, clearly imply, that the general idea is already in the mind ? How else should it know how to go to work, or what to reflect on ? That the universality consists in the idea ; and not merely in the name as used to signify, and recal into the mind, a variety of particular things, resembling that which is the immediate object of reflexion, is plain ; because, had we no previous, fixed notion what the name signifies, we could not know what particular things to apply it to, or assign any reason for applying it to one thing, rather than another. A person, in reading over a mathematical demonstration, certainly is conscious that it relates to some-
what

what else, than just that precise figure presented to him in the Diagram. But if he knows not what else, of what use can the demonstration be to him? How is his knowledge enlarged by it? Or how shall he know afterwards to what to apply it? — All that can be pictured in the imagination, as well as all that we take notice of by our senses, is indeed particular. And whenever any general notions are present in the mind; the imagination, at the same time, is commonly engaged in representing to itself some of the particulars comprehended under them. But it would be a very strange inference from hence, that we have none but particular ideas. As well almost might we conclude, that we have no other notion of any thing than of its name, because they are so associated in our minds, that we cannot separate them; or of the sun, than as a white, bright circle, such as we see in the heavens, because this idea or phantasm is apt to accompany all our thoughts of it *.

* According to Dr. *Cudworth*, abstract ideas are implied in the cognoscitive power of the mind; which, he says, contains in itself virtually (as the future plant or tree is contained in the seed) general notions or exemplars of all things, which are exerted by it, or unfold and discover themselves as occasions invite, and proper circumstances

It is a capital error, which some run into, of confounding the understanding with the imagination, and denying reality and possibility to every thing the latter cannot conceive, however clear and certain to the former. The

occur. This, no doubt, many will very freely reject, and condemn as whimsical and extravagant: I have, I own, a different opinion of it; but yet, in the manner and degree in which he has asserted it, I should not care to be obliged to defend it. It is what he thought *Plato* meant by making all knowledge to be Reminiscence; and in this, as well as other respects, he makes the human mind to resemble the divine; to which the ideas and comprehension of all things are native and essential, and not to be derived from any foreign source.

It may at least be said, that thought, knowledge, and understanding, being the originals and causes of all particular *sensibles*, and therefore *before* them, and *above* them; cannot be derived from them, or dependent upon them; and that what is thus true of mind in general, or of that first and all-disposing Mind, from which all inferior minds sprung, and of which they participate, 'tis reasonable to think true, in a lower degree also of these inferior minds, and of their ideas and knowledge.

The opinion that universal ideas are raised or formed out of particular ones, by separating common from individuating circumstances, this learned writer rejects as very absurd, and founded on a mistake of *Aristotle's* sense. And the other opinion, that they are only singular ideas annexed to a common term; or, in other words, names without any meaning; (held formerly by those, who were therefore called *Nominalists*, and of late revived) he pronounces to be so ridiculously false, as to deserve no confutation. Vid. Eternal and immutable morality.

power

powers of the imagination are very scanty and narrow ; and were the understanding confined to the same limits, little, nay, nothing could be known, and the very faculty itself would be annihilated. Nothing is plainer, than that the one of these often perceives, where the other is blind ; is surrounded with light and evidence, where the other finds all darkness, and, in innumerable instances, knows things to exist, of which the other can frame no idea ; and seldom or never does it happen, that they can keep pace with one another. What is more impossible, than for the imagination to represent to itself matter void of colour ; but thus is it perceived by the understanding, which pronounces, without doubt or hesitation, that colour, being no quality of matter, it does and must exist without it. Points, lines, and surfaces also, as mathematicians consider them, are entirely mental, or intellectual things, no notice whereof ever entered the mind by the senses, and which are utterly inconceivable to the imagination. Does it follow, therefore, that there are no such things ? Are we to believe that there can exist no particles of matter smaller than we can frame an image of to ourselves, or that there is no other kind or degree of equality, than can be judged of by the eye ?

This

This has been maintained; and on the same principles we must go on to say, that the mind itself, and its operations, are just what they appear to every one's reflexion, and that it is not possible for us to mistake in thinking of what we have formerly done, or thought, or what we shall hereafter do or think. But, surely, that philosophy can be little inviting, which thus explodes all independent truth and reality, resolves knowledge into particular modifications of sense and imagination, and makes these the measures of all things *.

The forgoing observations will receive farther light, from attending to the following example of the amazing stock of knowledge and new ideas, which the understanding may derive from one simple subject of contemplation.

Let us suppose a being to have presented to its observation any particular portion, (a cubic inch, for instance) of matter. If all intelligence is wanting, the being will stick for ever in the

* Man the measure of all things, (*πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον* — *μέτρον ἑκάστων ἡμῶν εἶναι τῶν τε ὄντων καὶ τῶν φανομένων ἑκάστω, ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι.* *Plat. Theæt.*) was a favourite maxim with *Protagoras*; by which he meant, that every thing was that, and no other, which to every one it seemed to be; and that there could be nothing true, nothing existent distinct from the mind's own fancies or perceptions,

individual, sensible object, and proceed to nothing beyond what it directly and immediately presents to it. But add intelligence, and then observe what follows.

First, there will appear the ideas of *entity*, *possibility*, and *actual existence*. Every perception being the perception of something, implies some kind of *reality* distinct from, and independent of itself; nothing being more grossly absurd, than to suppose the perception, or apprehension of a thing, to be the same with the thing itself. It would be as good sense to suppose examination, the same with the subject examined; the eye, the same with visible objects; memory, the same with the fact remembered; or desire, the same with the object desired. And yet this absurdity seems to be at the foundation of a late system of scepticism.

But not to dwell on this; in every idea also is implied the *possibility* of the *actual existence* of what it represents; nothing being clearer, than that there can be no idea of an impossibility, or conception of what *cannot* exist. These are evident intuitions of the intellectual faculty; which, therefore, thus, from every object of its contemplation, obtains the ideas now mentioned.

We

We may, next, observe that the *possibility* of the existence of matter implies the *actual* existence of *space*, without presupposing which, it could not be possible, nor could there be any idea of it. And the discernment we have of this *possibility*, as necessary and inseparable from the idea of matter, is nothing else than the discernment of the *necessary, actual* existence of space. The idea of space once got, we perceive the *Infinity* of it, as before represented, page 31. From the idea of matter, we are in the same manner informed of the *necessary existence* of *Duration*.

Again, by farther examining the above-supposed portion of matter, the intelligent mind will find that it can conceive, without a contradiction, of one part of it as being in one place, and another in another, and that consequently it is *divisible*. For the same reason it will find, that it can carry on this division; nay, so far can it penetrate beyond all the boundaries of imagination, that it will perceive certainly, that no end can be put to this division, or that matter is *infinitely* divisible; it being self-evident, that nothing that is solid, and has length, breadth, and thickness, can be so small as to be incapable of being divided.

From

From the same source it may farther gain the ideas of cause, and effect, and connexion. For let it conceive of two of the divided parts as moving in a direct line towards one another, and then consider what would follow. As it cannot conceive them to pass through one another, it will unavoidably determine, that *contact* and *impulse* will follow; and, as *necessarily connected* with these, some alteration in the motions of the impelling bodies. — By what criterion can that person judge of what is true or false; and why will he refuse his assent to any absurdity that can be proposed to him, who finds no difficulty in conceiving, that two bodies may penetrate one another, or move towards one another without meeting and impelling; or impel one another without any effect, or new modification of motion produced?

But not only would the mind thus perceive causation and necessary connexion, but, from any supposed direction and momentum of the moving bodies, before impulse, it might foretel the precise alteration of these that would be produced by it; and go on to determine *a priori*, and without the possibility of error, all the laws and effects of the collision of bodies, of the division and composition of motions, of the resistance of fluids and

centripetal forces, as they have been investigated and taught by natural philosophers.

Nothing need be said to shew, that, from the same foundation laid, the mind would gain the ideas of *number, proportion, lines, and figures*, and might proceed to *arithmetic, geometry*, and all the different branches of *mathematics*. — It might, in short, from this single subject of ideas and enquiry, learn not only the elements and principles, but the principal part of the whole body of science. Such is the surprizing sagacity, and inexhaustible fecundity of reason, and so great is the injury done to it, by confining it to the narrow limits of *sense, fancy, or experience* [1].

[1] And so false is that maxim of the schools; *Nil est in intellectu quod non prius fuit in sensu*. — One instance of what is here observed, not directly to the purpose, but worth mentioning by the way, because so well known, and, I think, generally mistaken; is the case of the man supposed to be born blind, restored to his sight, and required to distinguish between a globe and cube set before him, without feeling them. 'Tis surprizing that Mr. *Locke's* decision in this case should have passed so uncontradicted as it has. That the supposed person would not be able readily or immediately to say, which was one, or which the other, I acknowledge; but it seems certain, that he might, with the help of a little reflexion. For, instead of the globe or cube, let the objects proposed to him be a *square* and a *rectangular parallelogram* of unequal sides. To both senses the sides of the one would appear equal, and the other unequal:

When

When I consider these, and some other things, I cannot help wondering, that, in enquiring into the original of our ideas; the understanding, which, though not first in time, is, perhaps, the most fruitful and important source of our ideas, should have been so much overlooked. It has, indeed, been always considered, as, in general, the source of *knowledge*: But it should have been more attended to than it has been, that it is the source of knowledge, as it is the source of new ideas, and that it cannot be the one of these without being the other. The various kinds of agreement, and

Where
~~What~~ therefore could be the impossibility, or difficulty of his determining, that what he saw with equal sides was the square, and with unequal the oblong? Could he possibly suspect, that seeing was so fallacious a sense as to represent as equal, the most unequal things, or as one, the greatest number of things; and *vice versa*? In the same manner, he might distinguish between a square and a circle, and therefore between a globe and a cube, and, in various other instances, determine how what he *saw*, would *feel*, antecedently to experience. — He might also be enabled to distinguish between the globe and cube, and, in general, between one angle and figure, and another, by considering the different alterations of direction, which a body must receive in moving along their *peripherys*, as they appeared to his sight, and comparing this with what he before-hand knew by feeling. Thus might judgment, in these cases, supply the want of experience and sensation; as in numberless other cases (and particularly in the estimates we make of magnitudes and distances) it *corrects* sensation, and is substituted in the room of it.

disagreement between our ideas, which, as is said, it is its office to discover and trace, are so many new, simple ideas, of which it must itself have been the original. Thus, when it considers the two angles made by a right line, standing in any direction on another, and perceives the agreement between them and two right angles; what is this *agreement* besides their *equality*? And is not the idea of this *equality*, a new simple idea, obtained from the understanding, wholly different from that of the two angles compared, and representing self-evident truth? In much the same manner in other cases, knowledge and intuition suppose somewhat perceived or discovered in their objects, denoting simple ideas to which themselves originally gave rise. — This is true of our ideas of proportion; of identity and diversity, existence, connexion, incompatibility, power, possibility, and impossibility; and let me add, though prematurely, moral *right* and *wrong*. The first concerns *quantity*; the next, almost *all things*; the last, *actions*. And they comprehend the most considerable part of what we can desire to know of things, and the chief, if not all the objects of our reasonings and disquisitions [2].

[2] We find *Socrates*, to the like effect, in *Theætet.* after observing, that it cannot be any of the powers of sense

It is therefore essential to the understanding to be the fountain of new ideas; on which are founded, and about which are conversant, its subsequent improvement and advances. As bodily sight discovers to us the qualities of outward, visible objects; so does the understanding, which is the eye of the mind, and infinitely more subtle and penetrating, discover to us the qualities of speculative and in-

that compares the objects and perceptions of all the senses; and apprehends the general affections of things, and particularly identity, number, similitude, dissimilitude, equality, inequality; to which he adds, *καλον και αισχρον* asserting that this power is reason, or the soul acting by itself abstractly from matter, and independently of any corporeal impressions or passions; and that, consequently, in opposition to *Protagoras*, knowledge is not to be sought for in sense, but in this superior part of the soul, by which it apprehends absolute truth. *Μοι δοκει — οδ' ειναι τοις οντιν υδεν τε τοις οργανου ιδιον, αλλ' αυτη δι αυτης η ψυχη τα κοινα μοι φαινεται ως παντων επισκοπειν — ομως δε τοσπον γε προβεβηκαμεν, ωσε μη ζητειν αυτην (επιστημην) εν αισθησει το παρσπαν. αλλ' εν εκεινω τω ονοματι, οτι ποτ' εχει η ψυχη οταν αυτη καθ' αυτην πραγματευηται περι τα οντα.* “ It seems to me, that “ for the perception of these things, a different organ or “ faculty is not appointed; but that the soul itself, and “ in virtue of its own power, observes these general affections of all things. — So far we have advanced, as “ to find, that knowledge is by no means to be sought “ in sense; but in that denomination the soul has (or the part of it employed) “ when by itself it is conversant “ about things that are.”

tellectual objects, or whatever it is capable of being directed to; and thus, in a like sense, with the former, becomes the inlet of new ideas.—'Tis obvious, that the ideas now meant, presuppose certain subjects of contemplation, whose natures, connexions, and qualities they represent. I need not, surely, stay to shew, that there is no reason for denying them to be distinct and new ideas; or for ascribing them to any operations of the mind about its ideas, which can only new modify old ideas.

It may, perhaps, be not an improper division of all our simple ideas into original and subsequent ones. The former suppose no other ideas as necessary to our receiving them, but are conveyed to us immediately by our organs of sense, or our reflexion upon ourselves. The latter presuppose other ideas, and are built upon them; or they arise from attending to their natures and relations. Thus, our original ideas derived from external sensation and reflexion, lay a foundation for other ideas derived from internal sensation, and from the understanding.

But the following division of our ideas, though far from perfectly exact and complete, will be, on several accounts, better.

First,

First, Into those implying nothing real without the mind, or nothing real and true besides its own affections and sensations. And,

Secondly, Into those, which are images of something distinct from sensation, or which imply real, independent existence and truth.

Each of these general classes may be again subdivided: The *First*, Into those that denote the immediate effects of impressions on the bodily senses, without supposing any previous ideas, as all tastes, smells, colours, &c. and those that arise upon occasion only of other ideas; as the effects in us of considering order, happiness, and the beauties of poetry, sculpture, painting, &c.

The *second* class may be subdivided into such as denote the real properties of external objects; and the actions and passions of the mind: And those, which I have now represented as derived immediately from intelligence. By the notices conveyed to the mind through the organs of the body, or its observation of the necessary attendants and concomitants of certain sensations and impressions, it perceives the figure, extension, motion, and other primary qualities of material substances. By contemplating itself, it perceives the properties of spiritual substances; volition, consciousness, me-

mory, &c. To all these ideas, it is essential that they have real, certain, invariable archetypes actually existing, which they represent, and to which they are referred, and supposed to be conformable [3].

After the mind, from whatever possible springs, has been furnished with ideas of various objects and existences, they become themselves farther objects, or archetypes to ^{our} supreme, intellective faculty; from whence arises a new set of ideas, which are the perceptions of this faculty, and represent not the mind's own affections, but necessary truth. Antecedently to these, whatever other ideas we may be furnished with, nothing is *understood* [4]. Whatever feeds, or subjects of

[3] It is a very just observation of Dr. *Hutcheson's*, that extension, figure, motion, and rest, are more properly ideas *accompanying* the sensations of sight and touch, than sensations of either of these senses. See *Treatise on the Passions*, Sect. 1.

[4] It would, I believe, be best never to give the name of *ideas* to sensations themselves, any more than to actual volitions or desires; but to confine this word to the representation the mind makes to itself of past sensations, or its recollection and notice of them. An idea would thus universally imply some real, distinct existence, which is represented by it, and the object of it. And the proper division of our ideas would be, according to their different objects, into those which represent sensations, and the several powers and faculties of the mind; and into those which represent the real qualities of external objects, the general

know-

knowledge may be in the mind, nothing is known.

It should not be forgotten, that the understanding is greatly concerned in supplying us with several of the ideas of the first sort under this latter class. Its proper objects are truth, facts, and real existence. It is the nature of it, as already shewn, to apprehend these, and, from a power and sagacity innate and unlimited, to discover, and suggest them to us.

Of all the different kinds of ideas now mentioned, the inferior, animal creation seems possessed chiefly, if not solely, of those derived from the external senses. Brutes think, and will, and remember; but are not capable of making these the objects of a reflex act, so as to obtain ideas of them. They may hear all the sounds in music, and see all the lines and colours in a picture; but they perceive not harmony, or beauty. All the ideas, therefore, founded on inward reflexion, on a previous assemblage and comparison of ideas and on intelligence, seem, in a great measure, peculiar to ourselves.

affections of all things, and absolute truth. But it may not be easy, or necessary, to keep always, and strictly to this use of the word.

It

It is an observation very necessary to be made, before we leave what we are now upon; that the source of ideas I have insisted on, is different from *deduction*, and ought, by no means, to be confounded with it. This consists in investigating, by proper mediums, the relations of proportion, identity, connexion, &c between certain objects; ideas of which must have been previously in the mind, and got from intuition. That is; it supposes us already to have the ideas we want to trace; and therefore cannot give rise to new ones. No mind can be engaged in investigating it knows not what; or in endeavouring to find out any thing that it has no idea of, concerning an object. When; from the view of subjects to which they belong self-evidently, we have gained ideas of such and such principles, or general, abstract affections of things; we employ deduction, or reasoning, to trace these farther amongst other subjects, and in other instances, where they cannot be perceived immediately.

S E C T. III.

*Of the Original of our Ideas of Right * and Wrong in particular.*

LET us now return to our first enquiry, and the particular application of the foregoing observations to our ideas of *right* and *wrong* in actions.

'Tis a very necessary previous observation, that *right* and *wrong* denote simple ideas, and are therefore to be ascribed to some *immediate* power of perception in the human mind. He that doubts this, need only try to enumerate the distinct, simple ideas they signify; or to give definitions of them when applied, suppose, to *beneficence* or *cruelty*, which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions. From not attending to this; from laying down definitions of these ideas, and attempting to derive them from de-

* Though the words *right* and *wrong*, are very general in their signification, I have not thought it needful always to say *moral* right and wrong, in order better to ascertain my meaning; because it must be obvious to every one, that I have nothing else in view, or that I treat all along only of that species of *right* and *wrong*, which has the actions and manners of reasonable beings for its object.

duction,

duction, has proceeded a great part of that confusion, and those difficulties, which have attended the enquiries into their foundation and original. — There are, undoubtedly, some actions that are ultimately approved, and for justifying which, no reason need, or can be assigned; as there are some ends, which are ultimately desired, and for chusing which no reason can be given. Were not this true; there would be an infinite series or progression of reasons and ends subordinate to one another. There would be nothing at which to stop, and therefore nothing that could be at all approved or desired.

Supposing it then clear, that we have a power *immediately* perceiving right and wrong, and that our ideas of them are not to be derived from deduction; which, as before observed, is never the source of any new, original ideas: The point I am now to endeavour to establish, is, that this power is the *Understanding*, agreeably to the assertion at the end of the *first* section of this chapter. I cannot but flatter myself, that the main obstacle to the acknowledgment of this, has been already removed, by shewing, that the understanding is an immediate power of perception, and a source of new ideas; nor do I think it possible,
that

that there should have been so many disputes on this subject, had these two things been, on all hands, considered, and agreed to ; I mean, that our moral ideas are simple ideas, and that the understanding is a source of such ideas.

But, in order more explicitly and distinctly to evince what I have asserted (in the only way the nature of the question seems capable of) let me,

First, Observe, that it implies no absurdity, but evidently *may* be true. It is undeniable, that many of our ideas are gained from the understanding, or its intuition of truth, and the natures of things : Our moral ideas therefore *may* be thus gained. It is surely *possible*, that *right* and *wrong* may denote truth, and what we *understand* and *know* concerning certain objects, in like manner with proportion and disproportion, connexion and repugnancy, and the other ideas before-mentioned. — And as this is possible, so I know of nothing, that has ever yet been offered to shew the contrary. All that can appear, from the objections and reasonings of the Author of the *Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue* ; is only, what has been already observed, and what does not in the least affect the point in debate : That we have an immediate

power which perceives morality; that the words *right* and *wrong*, *fit* and *unfit*, express simple ideas; and that much confusion has arisen from attempting to define them. But that this power is properly a *sense*, and not *reason*; that these ideas denote nothing true of actions, nothing in the nature of actions, but only effects in us; this, I think, has been left entirely without proof. He appears, indeed, to have taken it for granted, that if virtue and vice are immediately perceived, or express simple, and therefore undefinable ideas; they must be perceptions of an implanted sense. But what conclusion could have been more hasty? For will any one take upon him to say, that all immediate powers of perception must be arbitrary, and implanted; and that there can be no simple ideas denoting truth, or any thing besides the qualities and passions of the mind? 'Tis then far from being a point so well decided, as some have represented it, that virtue is wholly factitious, and to be *felt*, not *understood*.

As there are some propositions, which, when attended to, necessarily determine all minds to *believe* them: And as (which will be shewn hereafter) there are some ends, whose natures are such, that, when perceived,
all

all beings immediately and necessarily *desire* them: So is it very credible, and easy to be admitted, that, in like manner, there are some actions, whose natures are such, that, when observed, all rational beings immediately and necessarily *approve* them.

I am not at all concerned what would follow, were all our ideas to be considered, as *derived from impressions, and *copies of impressions*, or as *deducible from sensation and reflexion*. — The first of these positions, is, I think, destitute of all proof; supposes, when applied in this, as well as many other cases, the thing in question; and, when pursued to its consequences, ends in the destruction of all truth and certainty, and the subversion of all our intellectual faculties. The other, wants much explication, to render it consistent with any tolerable account of the original of our moral ideas: Nor does there seem to be any thing necessary to convince a person, that all our ideas are not deducible from sensation and reflexion; except taken in a very large and comprehensive sense, besides considering, how Mr. *Locke* derives from them our *moral ideas*. He places them among our ideas of relations, and represents *Rectitude*, as signify-

* See Mr. *Hume's Treatise of Human Nature*, and *Philosophical Essays*.

ing only the conformity of actions to some rule or law ; which rules or laws, he says, are either *the will of God*, the *decrees of the magistrate*, or *the fashion of the country* : From whence it follows, that it is the greatest absurdity to apply *rectitude* to rules and laws themselves ; to suppose the *divine* will is directed by it ; or to consider it as *itself* a rule and law. But, it is undoubted, that this great man would have detested these consequences ; and, indeed, it is sufficiently evident, that he was strangely embarrassed, and inconsistent in his notions on this, as well as some other subjects. But,

Secondly, I know of no better way of determining this point, than by referring men to their own consciousness, and putting them upon examining and comparing their own ideas and perceptions. — Could we suppose a person, who, when he perceived an external object, was at a loss to determine, whether he perceived it by means of his organs of sight or touch ; what better method could be taken to satisfy him ? The least attention to our own state and circumstances, and an inward, irresistible consciousness, take away the possibility of doubting in all such cases. And it seems
not,

not, in any very peculiar degree, harder to determine in the case before us.

Were the question ; what that perception is, which we have of number, diversity, causation, proportion, or any of the other general principles and affections of things, about which reasoning is conversant ; and whether our ideas of them represent truth and reality perceived by the understanding, or particular impressions, made by the objects to which we ascribe them, on our minds ; were, I say, this the question ; would it not be sufficient to appeal to common sense, and to leave it to be determined by every person's private consciousness ? These ideas seem to me to have little or no greater pretence to be denominated perceptions of the understanding, than *right* and *wrong*.

It is true, some impressions of pleasure or pain, satisfaction or disgust, generally, if not always, attend our perceptions of virtue and vice. But these are merely the effects and concomitants of them ; and not the ideas or things themselves, which ought no more to be confounded with them, than a particular truth (as a particular property of a curve or figure) ought to be confounded with the pleasure that may attend the discovery or consideration of it. Some emotion or other, and some alteration

tion in the state of the mind, accompany, perhaps, all our perceptions ; but more remarkably our perceptions of right and wrong. And this, as we shall again observe in the next chapter, is what has led to the mistake of making them to signify nothing but emotions in us ; which error some have extended, even to all the objects of knowledge ; and thus have sunk into the most monstrous scepticism.

But to return ; let any one compare in his mind, the ideas arising from our *powers of sensation*, with those arising from an *intuition of the natures of things*, and enquire which of them his ideas of right and wrong most resemble. On the issue of such a comparison may we safely rest this question, with all those whose thoughts are yet unprepossessed in favour of any particular scheme. — He that can impartially attend to the operations of his mind, and the nature of his own perceptions, and determine that, when he perceives gratitude or beneficence, to be *right*, he perceives nothing *true* of them, or *understands* nothing, but only *suffers* from a sense, must have a turn of mind to me inconceivable. — Was it possible for a person to question, whether his idea of *equality* was gained from sense or intelligence ; he might soon be convinced, by ex-

amining

examining his own perceptions, and considering, whether he does not *know*, that between certain quantities there exists real, self-evident equality, which must be perceived by all minds, as soon as the objects themselves are perceived. — In the same manner may we satisfy ourselves concerning the original of the idea of *right*: For have we not like consciousness, that we discern the one, as well as the other, *in* certain objects? Upon what possible grounds can we pronounce the one to be *sense*, and the other *reason*? Would not a being purely intelligent, having endless happiness within his reach, *approve* of securing it for himself? Would he not *think* this right; and would it not *be* right? When we contemplate the happiness of a species, or of a world, and pronounce concerning the actions of reasonable beings which promote it, that they are *right*; is this judging erroneously? Or is it no determination of the judgment at all, but a species of mental taste? — Are not such actions *really right*, and *better* than the contrary actions? Or is every apprehension of rectitude in such actions, false and delusive, just as are the like apprehensions concerning colour, sound, and all the effects of external and internal sensation,

when taken to belong to the causes producing them?

It seems beyond contradiction certain, that every being must desire happiness for himself; and can those natures of things, from whence the *desire* of happiness, and aversion to misery, necessarily arise, leave, at the same time, a rational nature totally indifferent, as to all *approbation* of actions procuring the one, or preventing the other? Is there nothing that any *understanding* can perceive to be amiss in a creature's bringing upon himself, or others, calamities and ruin? Is there nothing truly wrong in the absolute and eternal misery of an innocent being? It *appears* wrong to us. And what reason can you have for doubting, whether it appears to you what *it is*? — Should a being, after being flattered with the hopes of bliss, and having his expectations raised, by encouragements and promises, to the utmost; find himself, notwithstanding, plunged into extream, irretrievable torments, would he not *justly* complain? Would he want a *sense* to cause the idea of *wrong* to arise in his mind? Is it not *true*, that here would be somewhat that *ought* not to be? Can goodness, gratitude, and veracity appear, to any unbiaſſed and rightly-informed mind, with the same characters,

ters, and in the same moral view, with cruelty, ingratitude, and treachery? Darknefs, surely, may as soon appear to be light.

It would, I doubt, be to little purpose, to plead further here; the natural and universal apprehensions of mankind, that our ideas of right and wrong belong to the understanding, and represent real characters of actions; because it will be easy to reply, that they have a like opinion of the *sensible qualities* of bodies; and that nothing is more common or easy, than for men, except they take particular care to examine and distinguish, to mistake their own sensations for the properties of the objects producing them; or to apply to the object itself, what they find always accompanying it, whenever observed. Let it therefore be observed,

Thirdly, That if right and wrong denote effects of sensation; it must imply the greatest absurdity, to suppose them applicable to actions: Or the ideas of *right*, and *wrong*, and of *action* must be incompatible, and essentially repugnant to one another; as much so, as the idea of pleasure and a regular form, or of pain and the collisions of bodies. — All sensations, as such, are modes of consciousness, or feelings of a sentient being, which must be of a nature

totally different from the particular causes which produce them. A *coloured body*, if we speak accurately, is the same absurdity and impossibility, with a *square sound*. We need no arguments or experiments to prove that heat, cold, colours, tastes, &c. are not real qualities of bodies; because the ideas of matter, and of these qualities, are incompatible *.—Let the reader now consider; is there indeed any such incompatibility between *actions* and *right*?

* It is chiefly from hence; from our own ideas, or the reason of the thing; from the *unintelligibleness* of colour, and other secondary qualities, when considered as modifications of matter, or the repugnancy to co-existence in the same subject which we perceive between these qualities and solidity and extension; that we conclude they are not properties of matter, but different effects produced in our minds by the action of matter upon them. Most of the experiments and facts alledged in confirmation of this, are in themselves no sufficient proofs of it, because equally applicable, as may be easily seen, to the real and primary qualities of matter. — 'Tis a remark, I know not how to forbear adding here; that, sensible qualities being now universally allowed not to be qualities inherent in matter; it is strange, the same thing should not be allowed to be equally evident with respect to thought and consciousness. Is the notion of *conscious, thinking, reasonable matter*, less absurd than that of *white or red matter*? Is there less repugnancy between the ideas? Is it less plain, that figure, solidity, magnitude, motion, and juxta position of parts are not, and cannot be desire, volition, and judgment; than it is that they cannot be cold or sour, or that any one thing is not, and cannot be another?

Is there any such great absurdity in affirming the one of the other? Are the ideas of them as totally different, as the idea of a sensation, and its cause?

On the contrary; the more we examine, the more indisputable, I imagine, it will appear to us, that we express strict, obvious, necessary truth, when we say of some actions, they are right; and of others, they are wrong. Some of the wisest men, after the most careful enquiry, have thought thus, and been the most persuaded, that these are real distinctions belonging to the natures of actions and characters. Can it be so difficult, for attentive and impartial persons, to distinguish between the ideas of sensibility and reason; between the *intuitions of truth* and the *passions of the mind*? Is that a scheme of morals we can be very fond of, which makes our perceptions of moral good and evil, in actions and manners, to be all vision and fancy; just as is a great part of the form and dress in which the whole material world appears to us? Who can help seeing, that right and wrong are as absolutely unintelligible, and void of sense and meaning, when supposed to signify nothing true of actions, no essential, inherent difference between them; as the perceptions of the external and in-

ternal senses are, when thought to be properties of the objects that produce them?

How strange would it be to maintain, that there is no possibility of *mistaking* with respect to right and wrong †; that the apprehensions of all beings, on this subject, are alike just, since all sensation must be alike true sensation? — Is there a greater absurdity, than to suppose, that the *moral rectitude* of an action is nothing absolute and unvarying; but capable, like all the modifications of pleasure and sensation, of being intended and remitted, of increasing and lessening, of rising and sinking with the force and liveliness of our feelings? Would it be less ridiculous to suppose this of the relations between given quantities, of the equality of numbers, or the figure of bodies?

In the last place; let it be considered, that all actions, undoubtedly, have a *nature*. That is, *some character* certainly belongs to them, and somewhat there is that may be *truly* affirmed of them. This may be, that some of them are right, others wrong. But if this is not allowed; if no actions are, in themselves,

† It will be observed presently, that the antient sceptics asserted universally there could be no such thing as *error*; and for the very reason here assigned.

either right or wrong, or any thing of a moral and obligatory nature, which can be an object to the understanding; it follows, that, in themselves, they *are* all indifferent. This is what is essentially true of them, and this is what all understandings, that perceive right, must perceive them to be. But are we not conscious, that we perceive the contrary? And have we not as much reason to believe the contrary, as to believe, or trust at all our own discernment?

In other words; every thing having a determined *nature*, or *essence*; from whence such and such truths concerning it necessarily result, which it is the proper province of the understanding to perceive, and the capacity of discovering which constitutes the idea of it: It follows, that nothing whatever can be exempted from its inspection and sentence, and that of every thought, sentiment, and subject, it is the natural and ultimate judge. *Actions*, therefore, *ends* and *events* are within its province. These it is capable of concerning itself about; and of these, as well as all other things, it belongs to it to judge. What now is this judgment? One would think it impossible for any person, without some hesitation and reluctance, to reply; that
the

the judgment his understanding forms of them is this; that they are all essentially *indifferent*, and that there is no one thing *righter* or *better* to be done than another. If this is judging truly; if, indeed, there is nothing which it is, in itself, right or wrong to do; how obvious is it to infer, that it signifies not what we do; that there is nothing which, *in truth and reality*, we, or any other beings, *ought*, or *ought not* to do; and that the determination to think otherwise, is an imposition upon rational creatures, which, in superior beings, must be rendered of no effect by the clear perceptions of reason. Why then should they not labour to check this in themselves, and to extirpate, from their natures, all the delusive ideas of morality, worth, and virtue? What though, from hence, should follow the utter deformation and ruin of the moral world? There is nothing *really* wrong in this.

A rational agent, void of all moral judgment; incapable of perceiving a difference, in respect of fitness and unfitness, to be performed, between any actions, however affecting himself, or others; and acting, from blind propensions, without any sentiments concerning what he does is; not possible to be conceived of. And, do what we will, we shall find

of right and wrong in particular. 75

find it out of our power, in earnest to persuade ourselves, that reason can have no concern in judging of, and directing our conduct; or to exclude from our minds all notions of right and wrong in actions.

But what deserves particular consideration here is this. If all actions, and all dispositions of beings, however different or opposite, are *in themselves indifferent*; the divine all-perfect Understanding, without doubt, perceives this; and therefore cannot *approve*, or *disapprove* of any of his own, or of his creatures actions: It being a contradiction to approve, or disapprove, where it is known that there is nothing moral, nothing right or wrong. — How he governs the world; what ends he pursues; how he treats his creatures; whether they are happy, or ruined; whether he is faithful, just, and beneficent, or false, unjust, and cruel; appears to him what *it is, indifferent*. What then can we rationally expect from him? Or what foundation is left for his moral perfections? How can we conceive him to pursue universal happiness as his end; when, at the same time, we suppose nothing in that end to engage the choice of any being; and that, as perfectly intelligent, he knows universal misery to be equally worthy of his choice, and

and equally proper and right to be pursued? Is it no derogation to his infinite excellencies, to suppose him guided by mere unintelligent inclination, in all his proceedings, without any direction from reason, or any *moral approbation*?

In short; it seems sufficient to overthrow any scheme, that consequences so strange, and so contrary to all reason, and our most natural and necessary notions of things, as the following, should arise from it: — That no being can judge one end to be better than another, or believe excellence in objects, or a real, inherent, moral difference between actions; without giving his assent to an impossibility and contradiction; without mistaking the *affections of his own mind for truth*, and *sensation for knowledge*. — That there being nothing intrinsically proper or improper, fit or unfit, just or unjust; there is, therefore, nothing *naturally* * *obligatory*; but all beings enjoy, from the reasons of things, and the natures of

* Moral right and wrong, and moral obligation or duty, must remain, or vanish together. They necessarily accompany one another, and make indeed but as it were one idea. As far as the former are fictitious and imaginary, the latter must be so too. This connexion, or coincidence between moral rectitude and obligation, so observable and important, will be at large considered hereafter.

actions,

actions, real, complete, and everlasting liberty to act as they will.

Upon the whole; I find it unavoidable to conclude, that the point I have endeavoured to explain and prove, is as evident as we can well desire any point to be. — The following important corollary arises from it:

That morality is *eternal and immutable*.

Right and wrong, it appears, denote what actions *are*. Now whatever any thing *is*, that it is not by will, or decree, or power, but by *nature and necessity*. Whatever a triangle or circle is; that it is unchangeably and eternally. It depends upon no will or power, to cause the three angles of a triangle, and two right ones, not to be equal; the periphery of a circle, and its diameter, not to be incommensurable; or matter not to be divisible, moveable, passive, and inert. Every object, and every idea of the mind, as before observed, has an indivisible and invariable essence; from whence arise its properties, and numberless truths concerning it. And the command, which Omnipotence has over things, is not to alter their abstract natures; to make them to be what they are not; or destroy necessary truth; which is contradictory, and would infer the destruction of all reason, wisdom, and knowledge. But the true
idea

idea of Omnipotence, is an unlimited command over all *particular, external* existences, to make, destroy, or vary them infinitely and endlessly : And even, with respect to external existences, there are truths implied in their general natures, and arising from every particular state of them, which, while this state continues, cannot, without a contradiction, be conceived alterable by any power. — The natures of things then being immutable ; whatever we suppose the natures of actions to be, that they must be immutably. If they are absolutely and universally indifferent ; this indifference is itself immutable, and there neither is, nor can be any one thing that, *in reality*, we *ought* to do rather than another. The same is to be said of right and wrong, morality and immorality, as far as they express *real characters* of actions. They must, immutably and necessarily, belong to those actions of which they are *truly* affirmed.

No will, therefore, can render *any thing* good and obligatory, which was not so antecedently, and from eternity ; or any action right, that is not so in itself ; meaning by *action*, here, not the bare external effect, or event produced ; but the ultimate principle or rule of conduct, or the determination of a reason-
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able being, considered as accompany'd with, and arising from the perception of some motives and reasons, and intended for some end. According to this sense of the word action, whenever the principle in conformity to which we act, or the thing ultimately intended, is different, the action is different, though the steps pursued, or the external effects produced, may be exactly the same. If we attend to this, the truth and sense of what I have just observed, will be easily seen. — Put the case of any thing whatever, the doing of which is indifferent, or attended with no circumstances of the agent that render it, on any account, better, or fitter to be done than omitted. Is it not plain that, while all things continue the same; it is as impossible for any will or power to make acting right and obligatory here, as it is for them to make two equal things unequal, without producing any change in either? 'Tis true, the doing any indifferent thing may become obligatory, by being commanded, by a being possessed of rightful authority over us: But then it is obvious, that there is a change produced in the circumstances of the agent, and that what *now* is obligatory, is not the same with what *before* was indifferent. The external effect, or event, or, in other words, the *mat-*

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ter of the action is indeed the same; but nothing is plainer, than that actions materially the same, may be not only different, but opposite, according to the various ends aimed at, or principles of morality with which the matter of them is connected; otherwise, cruel and beneficent actions might be the same; as when, by the same steps, a man designedly saves, or ruins his country.

When a thing, otherwise indifferent, becomes obligatory, by being made the subject of a *promise*; we are not to imagine, in this case, that our own will or breath alters the nature of things; or properly makes what is indifferent, not so. But what was indifferent before the promise (as, for example, *in given circumstances*, walking to such a place) is still so; and it cannot be supposed, that, after the promise, it becomes obligatory, without a plain contradiction. All that the promise does, is, to alter the connexion of a particular effect; or to cause that to be an *instance* of a general and eternal duty, which was not so before. There are few or no effects producible by us, which may not be, in this manner, variously modified, fall under different principles of morality; acquire connexions sometimes with happiness, and sometimes with misery;

misery; and thus stand in different relations to a reasonable nature.

The seeming exceptions, therefore, to what is here asserted, taken from positive laws, promises, &c. are nothing to the purpose. It appears, that when an obligation to particular indifferent things arises from the divine command, or positive laws; it is by no means to be inferred from hence, that obligation is the mere creature of will, or that the nature of what is indifferent is changed: Nothing here becoming obligatory, which was not so from eternity; that is, *obeying the divine will, and just authority*. And had there been, antecedently, nothing right in this, no determination or inducement, from the natures of things, to obey the divine will; it is certain, it could have induced no obligation, nor at all affected an intellectual nature, as such. — Will and laws signify nothing, abstracted from something previous to them, in the nature and circumstances of the law-giver, and the subject, to give them force, and render disobedience a crime. If mere will ever obliged, what reason can be given, why the will of one being should oblige, and of another not; why it should not oblige alike to every thing it requires; and why there should be any difference

between *power* and *authority*. It is eternal truth and reason, then, that, in all cases, oblige, and not mere will. So far, we see, is it from being possible, that any will or laws should *create* right; that they can have no effect, but in virtue of natural and antecedent right and justice.

Thus, then, is morality fixed on a sure and immoveable *basis*, and appears not to be, in any sense, *factitious*; or the *arbitrary production* of any power human or divine; but *equally everlasting* and *necessary* with all *truth* and *reason*. And this we find to be as evident, as that right and wrong signify a reality * in what is so denominated. How much more satisfactory to our minds, and honourable to virtue, is this, than to make it a mutable and precarious thing, entirely dependent on mental taste, fancy, or positive constitution; and without any standard in truth and nature? If I have reasoned right, this is properly and effectually to *annihilate* † it; because it is re-

* Ου γὰρ ἔχω ἐγώ γε εἶδεν ἔτι μοι ἐναργὲς οὐ, ὡς τὸ το, τὸ εἶναι ὡς οἶον τε μάλιστα καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν. *Plat. in Phæd.* Sect. 18.

† As much so, as it would be to annihilate *matter* and *motion*, to make them merely ideas, or modes of sensation of our minds.

moving it wholly from the natures of things; substituting absolute indifference in the room of right and wrong *in* actions, and absolving all beings from all *real* duty and obligation. But enough has been said to this purpose.

I shall put an end to this chapter, with observing; that the opinion of those, who maintain our ideas of morality to be derived from sense, is far from being entirely modern. There were among the antients, philosophers; *Protagoras*, in particular, and his followers; who entertained a like opinion; but extended it much farther, that is, to all *science*; denied all absolute and immutable truth; and asserted every thing to be relative to perception. And indeed it seems not a very unnatural transition, from denying absolute *moral* truth, to denying *all absolute* truth; from making right and wrong, just and unjust, relative to perception; to asserting the same of whatever we commonly rank among the objects of the understanding. Why may not he, who rejects the reality of rightness in beneficence, of wrong in producing needless misery, be led, by the same steps, to deny the certainty of other self-evident principles? Why may he not as well deny the reality, for example, of *straitness* in a line drawn the shortest way between two

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points;

points ; or of aptness and unaptness, of connexion and proportion between certain objects and quantities ? He that distrusts his reason in the one case, why should he not also in the other ? He that refers the former perceptions to a sense ; why should he not make *all knowledge to be sense*, as the before-mentioned philosopher did ? — It may, at least, be said, that consequences much worse, cannot follow from making all the principles of knowledge arbitrary and factitious, than from making morality so ; from supposing all that we think we perceive, of the natures and relations of things, to be merely affections of our minds, and not resemblances of any distinct and independent reality in things, than from supposing this of the objects of our moral discernment. If the one overthrows, by necessary consequence, all truth and reason, and represents them as unfixed and imaginary things ; the other has the like effect on that, which is the most important part of truth, and the noblest object of our minds. If the one destroys the necessary wisdom and intelligence of the Deity (the very idea of a mind, and of knowledge, being impossible, if there is nothing permanent in the natures of things, nothing *necessarily* true, and therefore nothing to be *known*) the other, equal-

equally, destroys what to us is an equally interesting part of his character, his moral perfections.

One argument which, it seems, *Protagoras* made great use of in maintaining his opinions, was; that colour and sound, and the other sensible qualities of bodies, are not things really existing without us when not perceived, or qualities always inherent in bodies; but sensations; or certain middle, relative, and ever-varying things begot between the sensible object and organ, or produced by the action of the one on the other: the same object, as he reasoned, often appearing to have different qualities to different persons; and no two persons perhaps having exactly the same ideas of any one sensible quality of any object*. From hence, and from a notion, not very consistent with it, that consciousness, and understanding, and all things, were to be resolved into matter and motion; he concluded, that all things are in a perpetual flux†; and that

* This was rejected by *Plato* and *Aristotle*; its being so abused to scepticism, and the taking away the natural discrimination of good and evil, begetting in the former, as *Dr. Cudworth* says, a prejudice against it. Chap. IV. 21.

† Εγω ερω, και μαλ' ε Φαυλον λογον, &c. "I will say, (nor will it be said amiss) that nothing is any thing in

nothing is true or false, any more than coloured or sonorous, in itself, but seeming-

“ itself; and that we never justly say of any object, that it
 “ is this or that. If we call an object great, it appears
 “ also little; if heavy, it is also light; and so of all ob-
 “ jects; nothing being any one thing more than another.
 “ But all things, of which we wrongly say, that they are,
 “ spring out of motion, and the mixture and composi-
 “ tion of things with one another; for nothing ever ab-
 “ solutely is, but is always generated.” *ἔστι μὲν γὰρ ἔστι*

πρὸς ἕδεν. αἰ γίγνεται. Vid. *Plat. in Theæt.* — *οἷα ἕκαστα*
ἐμοὶ φαίνεται, τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοὶ. οἷα δὲ σοὶ τοιαῦτα
αὐ σοί. “ What a thing appears to me, that it is to me.
 “ What it appears to you, that it is to you.” — *αἰσθη-*

σις ἀεὶ τὰ ὄντα αἰεὶ ἔστιν, καὶ ἀψευδής, ὡς ἐπισήμα
ἔσται. “ The object of sense is always truth, nor can it

“ deceive; for it is knowledge. *Ibid.*” — It was a fa-
 mous controversy among the antient philosophers; whe-
 ther all things stood still, or whether all things flowed.
Parmenides held the former; *Heraclitus*, and, after him,
Protagoras, and others, the latter. The meaning of this
 controversy (in part at least) was; whether there was, or
 was not any thing permanent and necessary in the natures
 of things; or, “ as *Aristotle* declares (*Arist. Met. Lib. iii.*
cap. 5.) “ whether there were any other objects of the
 “ mind, besides singular sensibles, that were immutable;
 “ and, consequently, whether there was any such thing as
 “ science or knowledge that had a firmitude and stable-
 “ lity in it.” The former denied this, and asserted
Φερόμενην ἔσταν, a moveable essence. “ The *Parmeni-*
 “ deans and *Pythagoreans*, on the contrary, maintained,
 “ that, besides singular sensibles, there were other objects
 “ of the mind universal, eternal, and immutable, which
 “ they called the intelligible ideas, all originally contained
 “ in one Archetypal mind or understanding.” Vid. *Intel-*
lectual System by Dr. Cudworth, p. 387. 2d. Edit.

ly and relatively to the perceiving mind. That he applied this particularly to moral good and evil, appears from several passages in *Plato's* † *Theætetus*, where these notions of *Protagoras's* are at large explained, and confuted. He that would have a fuller view of what is here said, may consult this Dialogue of *Plato's*, or *Dr. Cudworth's Treatise of Immutable and Eternal Morality*.

So much the same are men, and their opinions, in all ages, that the event, in our own times, has been conformable to what thus happened in *Socrates's* time, and to what was observed to be the natural tendency of the account of morality I have opposed: And it is astonishing how far some, who have embraced it, have extended the same opinion to our other perceptions, and revived, perhaps even exceeded the wildest doctrines of antient scepticism.

† Λεγε τοινω παλιν, ει σοι αρεσκει το μητι ΕΙΝΑΙ αλλω ΓΙΓΝΕΤΑΙ αι αγαθον και καλον. *Soc.* Tell me, is it your opinion, that nothing ever *is*, but is *made* good and virtuous? Αλλ' εκει ε λεγω, εν τοις δικαιοις και αδικοις, και οσιοις και ανοσιοις εδελυσιν ισχυριζεσθαι ως ην εστι φυση αυτων εδεν εσιαν εαυτα εχον, αλλα το κοινη δοξαν τεισιν ανεβαιναι αληθεις, τοτε όταν δοξη, και οσον αν δοκη χρονον, &c. *i. e.* They more especially asserted, that nothing is just or unjust, holy or unholy, naturally and essentially, but relatively to opinion or sense.

ticism. The primary, as well as secondary qualities of matter, cause, effect, connexion, extension, duration, identity, and almost all about which knowledge is conversant, have been represented as only qualities of our minds; truth itself, and belief, or knowledge, represented as a species of sensation: The idea confounded with its object: The *esse* and the *percipi* maintained to be universally the same, and the impossibility asserted of any thing different from impressions, or various kinds of weak and lively sensation. —

“ Thus, is there neither morality, nor matter,
 “ nor Deity, nor truth, nor any kind of exter-
 “ nal existence left. All our imagined discove-
 “ ries, and boasted knowledge, vanish, and the
 “ whole universe is reduced into a mere *ens ra-*
 “ *tionis*. Every fancy of every being is equally
 “ true and just. Nothing being present to our
 “ minds besides our own ideas, there can be no
 “ conception of any thing distinct from them;
 “ no beings but * ourselves; no distinction be-
 “ tween past and future time; no possibility of

* Nor ourselves neither; for to *exist*, and to *be perceived*, being the same, perceptions themselves, can have no existence, unless there can be perceptions of perceptions, *in infinitum*. Besides, by this system, the only idea of what we call *ourselves*, is the contradictory and monstrous one of

“ remem-

“remembering wrong, or foreseeing wrong. He
“is the wisest man, who has the most lively
“and fertile imagination, and in whose mind
“are associated the greatest number of ideas and
“sentiments; for their justness or corresponden-
“cy to the reality of things, it is the greatest
“absurdity ever to call into question.” When
persons are got these lengths, or avow princi-
ples directly implying them, it becomes high
time to leave them to themselves.

a series of successive and actually separable percep-
tions, not one of which *continues*, that is, *exists* at all;
and without any thing that perceives. — It might be
further remarked; that the very scheme that takes away the
distinction between past and future, and admits of no real
existence independent of perception, is itself derived from,
and founded upon the supposition of the contrary; I mean,
the supposition that there have been *past* impressions, of
which all ideas are copies; and that certain objects have
been observed to have been conjoined in *past* instances,
and by this means produced that customary transition in the
imagination from one of them to the other, in which rea-
soning is said to consist. It would have been abusing the
reader to mention these extravagancies, had not some of
them been started by Bishop *Berkely*; and his principles
taken and pursued to a system of scepticism, that plainly
includes them all, by another writer of the greatest talents,
whom I have often had occasion to refer to. See *Treatise*
of Human Nature, and *Philosophical Essays*, by Mr. *Hume*.

C H A P. II.

*Of our Ideas of the Beauty and Deformity
of Actions.*

HAVING, in the preceding chapter, considered our ideas of *right* and *wrong*; I come now to consider the ideas of *beauty*, and its contrary, which arise in us from the observation of actions.

This is the *second* kind of sentiment, or perception with respect to actions, which, I have observed, we ought carefully to attend to and distinguish. Little need be said to shew, that it is different from the former. We are plainly conscious of more than the bare discernment of right and wrong, or the cool judgment and determination of reason concerning the natures of actions. We often say of some actions, not only that they are *right*, but that they are *amiable*; and of others, not only that they are *wrong*, but *odious*, *shocking*, *vile*. Every one must see, that these epithets denote the *delight*; or, on the contrary, the *horror* and *detestation* felt by ourselves; and, consequently,

quently, signify not any real qualities of actions, but the *effects in us*, or the particular pleasure and pain, attending the contemplation of them. To say, that actions are in themselves *lovely* or *odious*; would be no less absurd, than to say of any other objects of our observation, that they are in themselves *grateful* or *ungrateful*, *pleasant* or *painful*.

“What now is the true account and original of these perceptions? Must they not arise entirely from an original, arbitrary structure of our own minds, by which certain objects, when observed, are rendered the occasions of certain sensations and affections? And thus, are we not, *here at least*, under a necessity of recurring to a *sense*? Can there be any connexion, except what arises from positive constitution, or the good pleasure of our Maker, between any objects and particular modifications of pleasure and pain in the perceiving mind?”

I answer; there may be such a connexion; and, I think, there is such a connexion in many instances; and particularly in that before us.

Why, or how the impressions made by *external objects* on our bodily organs, produce the sensations constantly attending them, it is not possible for us to discover. The same is true,

true, of the sensations or affections of mind produced by the objects of many of the *internal senses*. In such instances, we can conceive of no connexion between the effects in us and their apparent causes; and the only account we can give of the matter is, that "such is our frame; so God has seen fit to make us, and to adapt our faculties and particular objects to one another." But this is far from being true *universally*. There are objects and ideas, which have a *natural aptitude* to please, or displease our minds. And thus in the *spiritual* world, the case is the same, as in the *corporeal*; where, though there are events which we cannot explain, and numberless causes and effects, of which, for want of being acquainted with the inward structure and constitution of bodies, we know no more than their existence: There are yet causes likewise, the manner of whose operation we understand; and events, between which we discern a real, necessary connexion.

One account, therefore, of the sentiments we are examining, is; "that such are the *natures* of certain actions, that, when perceived, as they are, by a reasonable being, there must result in him certain emotions and affections."

That there are objects which have a natural aptitude to please or offend, or between which and the contemplating mind there is a necessary congruity or incongruity, seems to me unquestionable. — For, what shall we say of supreme and complete excellence? Are what we mean by these only particular modes or sensations of our minds; or, if real and objective things, can they be contemplated without *all* emotion? Is the aid of a sense necessary to make the character of the *Deity* appear *amiable*; or, would pure and abstract reason remain quite unaffected with, and indifferent to this object? What more is necessary to cause it to be loved and admired besides *knowing* it? The more it is known, and the better it is understood, and the more clear from infirmity and imperfection the intellectual eye is, must it not be the more delight?

Again; a reasonable being, void of all superadded determinations or senses, who knows clearly what order and happiness are, would, I think, unavoidably, receive *pleasure* from the survey of a universe, where perfect, boundless order prevailed; and the contrary prospect of universal confusion and misery, would necessarily *offend* him.

But

But his own happiness and misery are undeniably objects, which no being can contemplate with indifference. Of which in the next chapter.

What is thus true, in these and other instances, is particularly evident in the present case. 'Tis not indeed plainer, that, in any instances, there are correspondencies and connexions of things among themselves; or that one motion has a tendency to produce another; than it is, that virtue is naturally adapted to *please* every observing mind, and to promote the happiness of the world; and vice the contrary. — I cannot perceive an action to be right, without approving it; or *approve* it, without being conscious of some degree of *satisfaction* and complacency. I cannot perceive an action to be wrong, without *disapproving* it; or disapprove it, without being *displeased* with it. Right actions then, as such, must be *grateful*, and wrong ones *ungrateful* to us. The one must appear *amiable*, and the other *unamiable* and *base*. — Goodness, faithfulness, justice, and gratitude, on the one hand; and cruelty, treachery, injustice, and ingratitude on the other, are opposites, and cannot appear alike, or convey like sentiments to any mind. On all who can perceive and compare them, they must

must have opposite effects. The *first* must be liked, the *last* disliked; the first must be loved, the last hated. Nor can the contrary be asserted, or these sentiments supposed to be reversed, without a contradiction. To *behold* virtue, is to *admire* her. To behold her as she is, in her intrinsic and complete importance, dignity, and excellence, is to possess supreme affection for her. On the contrary; to *perceive* vice, is the very same as to *blame and condemn*; to perceive it in its naked form and malignity, is to dread and detest it above all things.

Self-approbation, and self-reproach, are the chief sources of private happiness and misery. These are connected with, and entirely dependent upon, our consciousness of practising, or not practising virtue. Self-approbation cannot be separated from the remembrance of having done *well*; nor self-condemnation from the remembrance of having done *wrong*. Nothing can be of more consequence to a being, who is obliged to be perpetually reflecting on himself, and his actions, than to be at peace with himself, and able to bear the survey of his actions. Virtue and vice, therefore, from the *natures of things*, are the immediate and principal,

cial, and the most constant and intimate causes of private happiness or misery.

It should be minded here, that these effects, arising from the consideration of virtue and vice, must be different, and in different degrees in different beings, or in the same being in different periods and circumstances of his existence. The pleasure received from virtuous actions, or the sense of *beauty* in them, must be varied by numberless things, both in the circumstances and natures of the actions, and in the understandings and conditions of the percipient beings. One, who has been a frequent observer of acts of the greatest virtue, or who has seen little of the extravagance of vice, would be but little moved with the same action, which a person who has always lived among ruffians, and to whom wickedness is become familiar, might observe with wonder. Pain or sickness, the influence of implanted byasses and propensions; many different dispositions of the temper, and associated ideas, may lessen or prevent the effects that would otherwise follow the perceptions of moral good and evil: But still the essential tendencies continue the same; and to every rational mind properly disposed, morally good actions must for ever be *acceptable*, and can never of *themselves*

selfes offend ; and morally evil actions must for ever be *disagreeable*, and can never of *themselves* please. — The effects produced by all causes depend on the particular circumstances in which they operate, and must differ as these differ. And, agreeably to this general observation, the same objects of moral discernment, whatever may be their natural aptitude, must affect reasonable beings differently, according to the different dispositions they are in, and the different clearness of their perceptions.

These things seem to furnish us with a hint concerning the happiness of the Deity, that may deserve to be just mentioned, as we go along. Were the foundations of happiness of a nature entirely precarious and factitious, it would be impossible to conceive, how that Being, who is himself the cause of all things, and can derive nothing from any foreign or precarious source, could be happy. But it has been shewn, that there are perceptions, between which and pleasure, there is a necessary connexion. There are objects of contemplation naturally productive of delight ; attributes of being that capacitate for blessedness, and perfections or qualities implying it. A reasonable being is capable of greater happiness than a being merely sensitive. He has,

in himself, the sources of superior good. And as much more wisdom and reason as any being possesses; so much the higher happiness he is capable of. There is therefore, in the natures of things, a stable and permanent foundation for happiness. And that of the Deity may result necessarily and wholly from what he is*; from his possessing in himself all truth, all good, all perfection, all that is *beatifying*.

But to return from this digression. What has been said, is not alone sufficient, to account for all the kinds and degrees of affection we feel in our minds, with respect to virtue and vice. In some superior beings, it is possible, it may be the whole account; but, in us, the intellectual faculty is yet in its infancy. The lowest degrees of it are, indeed, sufficient to discover *moral distinctions* in general; because these, in their capital branches, are self-evident, and necessarily connected with, or included in, the very ideas themselves of certain actions and characters. They must, therefore, appear to all, who are capable of making actions, and the natures of things,

* Ὅς εὐδαιμονίων μὲν ἔστι καὶ μακάριον, δι' ἃ μὲν δὲ τῶν ἐξωτέρων ἀγαθῶν, ἀλλὰ δι' αὐτὸν αὐτὸν, καὶ τῶ ποιοῦς τις εἶναι τὴν φύσιν. *Arist. de Rep. Lib. vii. cap. i.*

the objects of their reflexion. But the degree in which they appear ; the clearness, accuracy, force, and extent with which they are discerned ; and, consequently, their effects and influence, must, so far as the beings are considered as *purely* intelligent, be in proportion to the strength and improvement of their rational faculties, and their acquaintance with truth, and the natures of things.

From hence, it will be obvious, what occasion there is that, in *men*, the *rational principle*, or the *intellectual discernment* of *right* and *wrong*, should be aided by somewhat *instinctive*. — The dictates of mere reason, which are always slow, calm, and deliberate, would otherwise be frequently insufficient to direct them, and much too weak for their government. This will more plainly appear, upon considering how many strong passions, and merely animal desires and appetites, the condition and circumstances in which we are placed, rendered necessary for us ; but which, from the nature of them, could not but often draw us contrary to reason, and interfere with its dictates. For these passions and appetites, reason alone, tender and imperfect as it yet is in us, would not, certainly, be a sufficient match. This is particularly true of our first

years ; when our lower powers exert their full force, and reason has scarcely unfolded itself, or wants cultivation and improvement by use, instruction, and experience. How wisely then has our Maker provided supplies to its imperfections in our present frame, and enforced our intellectual perceptions by a superadded sense ; so that now, what appears worthy and right, has a positive determination of our natures in its favour, and is made the object of desire and delight, beyond what we should have otherwise felt ; and wrong, on the contrary, is made to excite additional sensations of aversion and horror in us. Thus are we more effectually engaged to virtue, and deterred from vice ; a due balance is preserved between the several parts of our constitution ; weight and ardor are given to the perceptions of the understanding, and its dictates properly seconded and supported ; which, else, would have been liable to be overpowered by every appetite and tendency of animal nature.

Upon the whole ; it appears, I think, from what has been said in this, and the preceding chapters, that, “ in contemplating the actions
 “ and affections of moral agents, we have both
 “ a *perception of the understanding*, and a *feeling*
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“*of the heart*; and that the latter, or the effects
“in us accompanying our moral perceptions,
“are deducible from two springs. They part-
“ly depend on the positive constitution of our
“natures: But the most steady and universal
“ground of them is, the essential congruity or
“incongruity between object and faculty, * as
“before explained.”

It may be difficult in this, as well as in many other cases, to determine the precise limits between these two sources of our mental feelings; and to say, how far the effects of the one are blended with those of the other. 'Tis undoubted, that we should have felt and acted, in almost every instance, otherwise than we now do, if the decisions and influence of reason had been left entirely calm and unsupported; nor is it easy to imagine how pernicious the consequences of this would have proved: For this reason, and also because we find, that the sensible and animal part of our natures is quite unaffected in few or none of the operations of our minds; it cannot be doubted, but that both the causes I have mentioned, unite their influence: And the great

* *Placet suapte natura — virtus.* Sen.

Etiamsi a nullo laudetur, natura est laudabile. Tully.

Question is, not whether implanted determinations, senses, or instincts are, in any way, concerned in morality; but, whether *all* is to be resolved to them.

It was, probably, for want of duly considering the difference I have insisted on between the *honestum* and *pulchrum*, the *δικαιον* and *καλον*; or for want of carefully distinguishing between the discernment of the mind, and the sensations attending it in our moral perceptions; that the Author of the *Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*, was led to derive all our ideas of virtue from an implanted sense. Moral good and evil, he every where describes, by the effects in us accompanying the perception of them. The *rectitude* of an action is, with him, the same with its *gratefulness* to the observer; and wrong the contrary. Were this just, it might be necessary to conclude, that they owe their original, as maintained by him, to a *moral sense*, with which the Author of our minds has been pleased to furnish them. But what can be more evident, than that *right* and *pleasure*, *wrong* and *pain*, are things totally different? As different as a cause and its effect; what is *understood*, and what is *felt*; absolute truth, and its *agrecableness* to the mind. — Let it be granted,

ed, as undoubtedly it must, that some degree of pleasure is inseparable from the observation of virtuous actions†. It is just as unreasonable to infer from hence, that the perception of virtue is nothing distinct from the reception of this pleasure; as it would be to infer, with some, that solidity, extension, and figure are, in like manner, only *particular modes of sensation*; because attended, whenever they are perceived, with some sensations of sight or touch, and impossible to be conceived by the imagination without them.

A well known and able writer on these subjects, tells us; that, after some * doubts, he at last satisfied himself, that all beauty, whether natural or moral, is a species of absolute truth; as resulting from, or consisting in, the necessary relations and congruities of ideas. 'Tis hard to say, what the meaning of this is. *Natural beauty* will be considered presently. And as to *moral beauty*, one would think, that the only thing meant, must be, that it denotes a real quality of certain actions. But the word

† The virtue of an action, Mr. Hume says, is its *pleasing* us after a particular manner. *Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. iii. page 103.

* See Mr. Balguy's *Treat on the Foundation of Moral Goodness*, p. 61.

beauty seems always to refer to the reception of pleasure; and the *beauty*, therefore, of an action or character, must signify its being such as *pleases us*; or has an aptness to *please* when perceived: Nor can it be just to conceive any thing in the action itself, or to affirm any thing of it, besides *this aptness*, or that objective goodness or rectitude from which it proceeds. Beauty and loveliness are synonymous; but an object *self-lovely* can only mean an object, by its nature, fitted to produce love.

But it may be further worth observing, before we quit this subject; that the epithets *beautiful* and *amiable* are, in common language, confined to actions and characters that please us *highly*, from the peculiar degree of moral worth and virtue apprehended in them. All virtuous actions must be pleasing to an intelligent observer; but they do not all please to the degree necessary to entitle them to these peculiar denominations, as we generally apply them. — What is meant by the different degrees of virtue and vice; of the approbation and disapprobation of actions; requires some explication, and will be the subject hereafter of a particular enquiry.

I will now add a few words concerning *natural beauty*; which, though not directly to
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my present purpose, requires some notice. What has been said of the former species of beauty, is, with a little variation, applicable to this. The general source of it, as observed by Dr. *Hutcheson*, is uniformity amidst variety. If we ask, why this *pleases*? There seems no greater occasion here to have recourse to an arbitrary, internal sense, than there was in the former case. The principal reason, I think, is the *natures* of variety and uniformity, which are such, that, whenever united they are adapted to please every free, unbiaſſed mind that discerns them. — Some objects, we have seen, are naturally satisfactory to our thoughts, or carry in themselves a power to give pleasure, when surveyed; to which, in the present case, it is no objection, any more than it was in the former, that this pleasure may be overcome, or prevented, in many circumstances of the mind; as, when under any indisposition; when the attention is engaged by more powerful and interesting objects and impressions; or through the influence of associated, disagreeable ideas. And though, for these reasons, regular and harmonious forms may not always equally gratify, or even may sometimes offend; yet they are incapable of offending, *as such*, or under the conception of regular and
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harmonious: That is, in strict and proper language, it is not *they* ever give pain, but some other cause, or connected circumstance and idea.

The following things may be observed concerning them, which may be considered as contributing towards producing the mind's complacency in them; and on which, in a great measure, depends our preference of them.

First, They are more easily comprehended by the mind. Every one knows, how much more difficult it is to retain, in the memory, a multitude of things which are unconnected, and lie in confusion, than of things disposed into a regular method and plan; one, or a few of which, when conceived, infer all the rest. It is order and uniformity which unite the parts of a complicated object, so that we can survey it at once with distinctness and satisfaction; whereas, if it wanted these, it would become not one, but a multiplicity of objects, our conceptions of it would be broken and embarrassed, between many different * parts, which stood in no fixt relations, and had no correspondence

* See *The Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty*, Sect. viii. 2.

to one another, and each of which would require a distinct idea of itself. By regularity is variety measured and determined, and infinity itself, as it were, conquered by the mind and brought within its view. The justness of these observations will appear to any one, by considering abstract truths, and general laws of nature ; or by thinking of the particular instance, of a thousand equal lines, as ranged into the form of a regular Polygon ; or, on the contrary, as joined to one another, at adventures, without observing any order.

Further ; order and symmetry are what give things their stability and strength, and subserviency to any valuable purpose. What strength would an army have, or what would it be fit for, without order ? Upon what depends the health of animal bodies, but upon the due order and adjustments of their several parts ? What happiness could prevail in the world, if it was a scene of confusion ; a general and perfect chaos ?

Thirdly, Regularity and order evidence art and design. The objects in which they appear bear the impresses of mind and intelligence upon them ; and this, perhaps, is one of the principal foundations of their agreeableness.

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These things, however, are most properly effects and consequences of uniformity and order; and therefore it must not be thought, that there is not in the regular forms themselves, abstracted from these considerations, something *immediately* agreeable.

Disorder and confusion denote only the negation of regularity and order; or any arrangement and disposition of things, which are not according to a law, rule or plan, and prove not design. These are not positively displeasing; except where we previously expected order; or where impotence and want of skill appear, and the contriver has either failed of his design or executed it ill.

'Tis scarcely needful to observe, that Brutes are evidently incapable of the pleasures of beauty, because they proceed from a *comparison* of ideas and the discernment of *analogy*, *design*, *proportion* and the various relations and connexions of the parts of objects, to which their faculties dont reach.

There are some who assert that, if we except the pleasure arising from the apprehended art; it is *variety* alone that pleases in beautiful objects; and the *uniformity* only as necessary to make it distinctly perceivable by the mind. It might, perhaps, with more reason, be affirmed

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ed that it is the *uniformity* alone that pleases, and the *variety* only as requisite to its being exhibited and displayed in a greater degree. But neither of these assertions is exactly true.

'Tis also asserted, as before observed, that *natural beauty* is a real quality of objects. He who approves of what has been offered on *moral beauty*, will easily apply it here and satisfy himself. 'Tis impossible for any one to conceive the objects themselves, to be endowed with more, than a particular order of parts, and with *powers*, or an *affinity* to our perceptive faculties, thence arising; and, if we call this *beauty*, then it is an absolute, inherent quality of certain objects; and equally existent whether there be any mind to discern it or not. But, surely, order and regularity are, more properly, the *causes* of beauty than *beauty itself*. This dispute after all, when duly considered, must be chiefly about the meaning of the word beauty; and therefore deserves little regard.

I shall only observe further on this head; that it may be worth the reader's attention and enquiry, how far the account given of the pleasures received from the contemplation of moral good and of natural objects, may be ap-
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ply'd to the pleasures received from many other sources ; as the *approbation of others*, *greatness of objects*, *discovery of truth* and *increase of knowledge*.

Having now finished our enquiry into the nature and original of our ideas of right and wrong ; beauty and deformity ; it comes naturally in our way, as a proper supplement to this and the preceding chapters, to take notice of our general notions of *perfection* and *excellency* in objects. Some observations have been before made upon this subject, and it coincides so far with the Subjects already treated of, that little or nothing peculiar can be said on it. It will, however, be very proper here to engage the reader's particular attention to it.

The same persons who assert that there is no distinction, in point of real *objective* excellence and worth, between actions and characters, may be expected to assert, and undoubtedly they will assert the same of all things ; and fly to a *sense* to account for any *preference* we give in our ideas to any objects. * We have,

* We have the ideas of greater decency and dignity in some pleasures than in others ; as in the pleasures of the imagination or the understanding, than in those of the bodily senses. Dr. *Hutcheson*, after observing this, seems uncertain whether it ought to be ascribed to a constant opinion necessarily

necessarily, the notion of different degrees of perfection in different objects; but, upon this scheme, this is all *illusion*. There is no one thing *truly and absolutely better* than another, but the whole compass and possibility of being is, to the eye of reason, entirely on a level; alike void of all *intrinsic* difference in point of dignity and excellence. Nay, the very notion of *intrinsic* excellence, *self-worth* or different degrees of *objective* perfection and imperfection, implies an impossibility and contradiction. How can it be possible to acquiesce in such a scheme? When we conceive of an intelligent being as a more *noble and perfect* nature than a clod of earth; do we then err? Or is it owing to an implanted power, that we at all make such a distinction; or that, in particular, we give the preference in our esteem to the divine nature, as surpassing infinitely in *excellence and dignity*, all other natures? The truth is; these, like the other ideas already insisted on, are ideas of the understanding. They are derived from the cognizance it takes of the comparative essences of innocence in the former pleasures; which would reduce the preference we give them, as he says, to the *moral sense*; or whether there be not in these cases a different sort of perceptions to be reckoned another class of sensations. See *Treatise of the Passions*, Sect. I. Art. I.

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of things; and arise necessarily in the mind, upon considering certain objects and qualities; as denoting what they *are*.

There is in nature an infinite variety of existences and objects; which we as unavoidably conceive endowed with various degrees of perfection, as we conceive of them at all, or consider them as *different*. It is not possible to contemplate and compare dead matter and life; brutality and reason; misery and happiness; virtue and vice; ignorance and knowledge; impotence and power; the deity and inferior beings; without acquiring the ideas of *better* and *worse*; *perfect* and *imperfect*; *noble* and *ignoble*; *excellent* and *base*.—The first remove from nothing is unwrought matter. Next above this is vegetative life; from whence we ascend to sensitive and animal life, and from thence to happy and active intelligence; which admits of an infinite variety of degrees, and of different orders and classes of beings, rising without end, above one another. Every successive step and advance of our thoughts in this gradation, conveys the notion of higher and higher excellence and worth; 'till at last we arrive at uncreated, complete and supreme excellence. If this is not *intellectual* perception; but *sensation* merely; then may all nature

ture as it now appears to us be reversed; the top placed at the bottom, and the bottom at the top; an atom of unconscious, inactive matter may be advanced to the first place in the scale, and conceived to possess supreme excellence; and that as justly and truly as now the contrary is conceived.

I am pleased to find a worthy and excellent writer expressing fully my sentiments on this subject; with whose words I shall conclude this chapter. † We cannot, says he, avoid observing, “ that of things which occur to our thoughts, “ the idea of superior excellence accompanies “ some upon a comparison with others. As “ the external senses distinguish between pleasant and painful in their objects, and the internal sense perceives a difference between “ the beautiful and the deformed; so the *understanding* not only separates truth from falsehood, but discerns a dignity in some beings “ and some qualities beyond others. ’Tis not “ possible for a man to consider inanimate nature and life, the brutal and the rational “ powers, or virtue and vice, with a perfect indifference, or without preferring one before “ the other in his esteem. And the idea of

† See Mr. Abernethy’s Sermons, Vol. II. p. 219.

“ a difference in the degrees of their perfecti-
 “ on, as necessarily arises in his mind, as that
 “ of a difference in their being.

C H A P III.

Of the Original of our Desires and Affections.

WHAT should next be treated of, according to the method which has been laid down, are our ideas of good and ill-desert. But I chuse, first, to take into consideration the original of our affections in general, and especially of the two leading ones; *self-love* and *benevolence*. This is a subject which has a near relation to those which have been already examined, and to the design of this Treatise. I cannot find a properer place for what 'tis necessary I should say upon it; and, therefore, doubt not, but I shall be excused, for interrupting so far the order at first proposed, as to introduce it here.

Each of our affections has its particular object and end, which we are led necessarily to desire. Thus *Self-love* leads us to desire and pursue

pursue private ; and *Benevolence*, publick happiness. *Ambition* is the love of fame, power and distinction ; and *Curiosity* is the love of what is new and uncommon. The objects of these and all our other affections, are desired for their own sakes ; and constitute so many distinct ultimate ends and principles of action. This is essential to an affection or appetite, and the very notion of it. What is not at all desired *for itself*, but only as a means of something else, cannot, with any propriety, be called the object of an affection. So, for example ; if, according to the opinion of some, we desire every thing merely as the means of our own good, and with an ultimate view to it, then in reality we desire nothing but our own good, and have only the one single affection of self-love.

We are, I believe, capable of obtaining abundant satisfaction about the original of some of the tendencies and desires we feel ; and the attentive reader, from the nature and drift of the preceding reasonings, may have been already led to anticipate what I shall say.

As all moral approbation and disapprobation, and our ideas of beauty and deformity, have been ascribed to an *internal sense* ; meaning by this, not *any* inward power of perception, but an *implanted power*, different from *reason* ;

so, all our desires and affections have, in like manner been ascribed to *instinct*, meaning by *instinct*, not merely the immediate desire of an object, but the reason of this desire or an implanted propension. — The former opinion we have already at large examined. We are now to examine the latter.

“ Is then all desire to be considered as *wholly instinctive*? Is it, in particular, owing to “ nothing but an arbitrary principle planted in “ our natures, or an original bias given them, “ which they might have either wanted, or “ have received in the contrary direction; “ that we are at all concerned for our own good, “ or for that of others?”

As far as this enquiry relates to private good, we may without hesitation or doubt answer in the negative. The desire of happiness for ourselves, certainly arises not from *instinct* in the sense I have given of it, but from the natures and necessity of things. The full and adequate account of it, is, *the nature of happiness*. 'Tis impossible, but that creatures capable of pleasant and painful sensations, should *love and chuse* the one, and *dislike and avoid* the other. No being, who knows what happiness and misery are, can be supposed indifferent to them, without a plain contradiction. Pain is

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not a *possible* object of *desire*; nor happiness, of *aversion*. No power whatsoever can cause a creature in the agonies of torture and misery to be pleased with his state, to like it for itself, or to wish to remain so. Nor can any power cause a creature rejoicing in bliss, to dislike his state, or be *afraid* of its continuance. Then only can these things happen, when pain can be *agreeable*, and pleasure *disagreeable*; that is, when pain can be pleasure; and pleasure, pain.

From hence I infer, that it is by no means, in general, an absurd method of explaining our affections, to derive them from the natures of things and of beings. For thus we see are we to account for one of the most important and urgent affections within us. To the preference and desire of *private happiness* by all beings, nothing more is requisite than to *know* what it is. — “And may not this be true, likewise, of *publick* happiness? May not benevolence in some degree be *essential* to *intelligent* beings, as well as self love to *sensible* beings?”

But let us enter into a more distinct consideration of this point, and try what may be particularly offered, to shew this to be indeed the true foundation of *Benevolence*.

What we have already shewn carries great weight with it, and seems alone sufficient to satisfy us. For, let us, once more, put the case of a being *purely reasonable*. 'Tis sufficiently evident, that (tho' by the supposition void of any implanted byasses) he would not want all principles of action, and all inclinations; or be in a state of absolute, universal indolence and indifference. It has been shewn he would perceive virtue and possess affection to it, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge and understanding. But, at least, the nature of *happiness* would engage him to chuse and desire it for *himself*. And is it credible that, at the same time, he would be totally and necessarily indifferent about it for *others*? Is there nothing unlikely in the supposition, that it has that in it, which would infallibly determine him to study and seek it for *himself*; and yet nothing in it, which can excite him to a single thought or the least approbation of it for others? Would the nature of things, upon this supposition, be uniform and consistent? Would he not be capable of seeing, that the happiness of others is to them as important as his is to him; and that it is in itself the same; equally good; equally valuable and desirable, whoever possesses it? — Every one will acknowledge it to be impossible, that he should

should *desire pleasure* for himself, and *misery* for others. It should seem alike impossible, that he should desire pleasure for himself, but not at all for others ; however resembling him ; however related to him ; or of whatever character and dignity.

In considering these things, we should be careful to keep in view the suppos'd circumstances of the being about whom I argue, or to conceive of him as left to the exercise and effects of clear, unbiaſſed reason ; and under no influence from competitions, interfering of interests, or other causes, which might have any tendency to prejudice or deceive him.

Let us again enquire ; would not this being assent to this proposition ; happiness is *better* than misery ? A definition has been asked of the word *better* here. With equal reason might a definition be asked of the word *bigger*, when the whole is affirmed to be *bigger* than a part. Both denote simple ideas, and both *truth*. The one, what happiness, abstractly and universally, is, compared with misery ; and the other, what the whole is, compared with a part. And a mind that should think happiness not to be *better* than misery, would mistake as grossly, as a mind that should believe the whole not to be *bigger* than a part. It cannot therefore be reasonably doubted, but that such a being,

contemplating and comparing happiness and misery, would as unavoidably as he perceives their difference, *prefer* the one to the other; and *chuse* the one rather than the other, for his fellow-beings. Nor can it, I should think, be easy for any to bring themselves to dispute this; and to believe, that there is no being, who, *as reasonable*, if the everlasting, infinite happiness or misery of the whole universe depended on the slightest action in his power, would not be necessarily unconcerned what he did, and as readily determine for the one as the other. This is no further possible, nor can happiness and misery appear any farther *alike good and eligible* to any agent, than he conceives them *the same*; judges the one to be the other; believes contradictions true, and confounds the essences of things.

If the idea the word *better* stands for, in the before-mentioned proposition, is indeed to be referred to a sense, and implies nothing true; if to the judgment of right reason, happiness and misery are, in themselves, indifferent, and neither preferable to, or better than, the other; this must be perfectly understood by the Deity. There can, in him, therefore, be no preference of one to the other. There is nothing *in* happiness to engage or justify his choice of it. What account, then, is to be
given

given of his *goodness*? — Some, I know, will say; the same account that is to be given of his *existence*; that is, no account at all. But there is, surely, an account to be given of his existence; even the same with that which is to be given of all necessary truth: And this account is fully applicable to his *benevolence*, as the original of it has been here explained. But were this, universally, an implanted and factitious principle; it would be unavoidable to conclude, that it cannot exist in a nature from which must be excluded every thing of this kind. How, therefore, upon this supposition, will our evidences of this attribute, the foundation of all our comfort and hope, be lessened? Can we admit a supposition which obliges us to conceive of him as good, *without*, nay, *contrary* to, his intelligence? — This is a similar argument to that used before in the first chapter; and it may be further proper to hint, though it can scarce escape observation, that, what I have endeavoured to establish in that chapter, infers and includes what I have said on the present subject; and if either be right, both must be so.

It is confessed, that, in our inward sentiments and approbation, we are determined to make a distinction between publick happiness and misery; and to apprehend a preferableness of the one to the other. But it is asserted,
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that this is owing to our frame ; that it arises from senses and instincts *given* us, and not from the *nature* of these objects. — But why is this asserted? What proof can be given of it? — It *may be* owing to the latter cause. The instance of self-love *demonstrates* this. — Let any thing equivalent be offered for the contrary.

After the same manner, in which self-love and benevolence have been accounted for, may we account for some of our other affections. But these being of so much less importance, and the consideration of them not so much in my way, I shall only just touch upon the love of fame and of knowledge.

Approbation and disapprobation of ourselves and others, as our actions and dispositions, or those of others, are observed to be right or wrong, are unavoidable. The intelligent nature therefore, alone, being sufficient for the perception of morality ; lays the foundation of fame and honour. And it is not much less evident that it will, likewise, give rise to the desire and pursuit of them.

Can a reasonable being be indifferent about his own approbation? If not about his own; why should we think him necessarily so about that of others? Is there nothing in the *good opinion, love, and esteem* of his fellow-beings,

beings, or of an observing world, which can incline him to prefer and chuse them, rather than their *contempt* and *aversion*? Is it, in particular, only from instinct, that any creature has any concern, abstracted from its effects, about the approbation of God? Has *this* nothing in itself desirable; or which is adapted to excite our wishes of it, and kindle ambition?

The desire of *knowledge* also, and the preference of *truth*, must arise in every intelligent mind. Truth is the proper object of mind, as light is of the eye, or harmony of the ear. To this it is, by its nature, fitted, and upon it depends its dignity, improvement, and very existence; there being no idea possible of *mind*, or *understanding*, without supposing something to be *understood*. Truth and science are of infinite extent; and it is inconceivable, that the understanding can be indifferent to them; that it should want inclination to employ its native sagacity and powers to search into them; that its progress, in the discovery of them, should be attended with no satisfaction; or that, with the prospect before it, of unbounded scope for improvement and endless acquisitions, it should be capable of being equally contented with error, darkness, and ignorance.

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Why, therefore, reasonable beings love *truth, knowledge, and honour*; is to be answered in the same manner with the enquiry; why they love and desire *happiness*? This, we have seen, is, and cannot but be desired *for itself*; and as, to a general reflexion, it must appear unlikely, that it should be the *only* object of this kind, we have sufficient evidence that, in fact, it is not.

In the method now pursued, we might go on to give a particular explication of the causes and grounds of the various sentiments of veneration, awe, love, wonder, esteem, &c. produced within us by the contemplation of certain objects. As some objects are adapted to *please*, and as others necessarily excite *desire*; so almost every different object has a different effect on our minds, according to its different nature and qualities. And these emotions, or feelings, are almost as different and various as the objects themselves of our consideration. Why should we scruple ascribing this, to a necessary correspondence, in the natures of things, between these feelings and their respective objects? — It cannot, surely, be true, that, antecedently to arbitrary constitution, any affections of our minds are equally and indifferently applicable to any objects and qualities: Nor

would

would it be consistent in any one to assert this, who does not go so far, as to deny all *real* connexion between things; all *real* dependence of events on one another; all proper subser- vency of means to ends, or essential aptness of things for particular purposes; in the mate- rial and rational world.

But it must not be forgotten, that, in men, the sentiments and tendencies of the intelligent nature, are, in a great degree, mingled with the effects of arbitrary constitution. It is very necessary, that this observation, before insisted on, should be here called to mind. Mere rational, dispassionate, and general benevolence would, in us, be a principle much too weak; and utterly insufficient for the purposes of our present state. And the same is true of our other rational principles and desires.

This, perhaps, will afford us a good reason for distinguishing between *affections* and *pas- sions*. The former, which we apply indiscriminately to all reasonable beings, may most properly signify the desires and inclinations founded in the reasonable nature itself, and es- sential to it; such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of truth. — These, when aided and strengthened by additional, instinctive de- terminations, take the latter denomination;
or

or are, properly, *passions*. — Those tendencies within us, that are merely arbitrary and instinctive, such as hunger and thirst, and the desires between the sexes, we commonly call *appetites* or *passions* indifferently, but seldom or never *affections*.

I cannot help, in this place, stepping aside a little, to take more particular notice of an opinion already referred to; I mean, that of those, who will allow of no *ultimate* object of desire, or motive to action, besides private good. What has given rise to this opinion, has been, the not taking care to distinguish between *desire*, and the *pleasure* implied in the gratification of it. The latter is subsequent to the former, and founded in it: That is, an object, such as fame, knowledge, or the welfare of a friend, is desired, not because we foresee, that, when obtained, it will give us pleasure; but, *vice versa*; the obtaining it gives us pleasure, because we previously desired it, or had an *affection* carrying us immediately to it, and resting in it. And, were there no such affections, the very foundations of private enjoyment and happiness would be destroyed. It cannot be conceived, that the obtaining what we do not desire, should be the cause of pleasure to us; or that what we are perfectly indifferent to, and

and is not the end of any affection, should, upon being possessed, be the means of any kind of indulgence, or gratification to us*.

Besides, if every object of desire is considered merely as the cause of pleasure; one would think, that, antecedently to experience, no one object could be desired more than another; and that the first time we contemplated fame, knowledge, or the happiness of others; or had any of the objects of our natural passions and desires proposed to us, we must have been absolutely indifferent to them, and must have remained so, till, by some means, we were convinced of the connexion between them and pleasure.

For further satisfaction on this point; nothing can be more proper than to consider; whether, supposing we could enjoy the same pleasure without the object of our desire, or by neglecting it, we would be indifferent to it. Could we enjoy pleasures equivalent to those attending knowledge, or the approbation

* "The very idea of happiness or enjoyment, (as Dr. Butler says) is this, an appetite or affection having its object." See Sermons preached at the *Roll's* chapel. My chief design here is to throw together a few observations, which seem to have a tendency to confirm, what this writer has so well said on this subject.

of others, without them, or with infamy and ignorance, would we no longer wish for the one, or be averse to the other? Would a person be indifferent, whether he stirred one step to see the strangest spectacle, and lose all curiosity; were he assured he should receive equal sensations of pleasure by staying where he is? Did you believe, that the prosperity of your nearest kindred, your friends, or your country, would be the means of no greater happiness to you, than their misery; would you lose all love to them, and all desires of their good? Would you not chuse to enjoy the same quantity of pleasure *with* virtue, rather than *without* it? Any one, who would, in this manner, examine himself, might easily find, that all his affections and appetites (self-love itself excepted) are, in their nature, *disinterested*; and that, though the subject of them be *self*, and the effect of them the gratification of *self*, their direct tendency is always to some particular object different from private pleasure, beyond which they carry not our view. So far is it from being true, that, in following their impulses, we aim at nothing but our own interest; that we continually feel them, drawing us astray from what we *know* to be our interest; and may observe men every day, carried
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by them to actions and pursuits, which they acknowledge to be ruinous to them.

But to return to where we left off; — Of our several passions and appetites, some are subordinate to self-love, and given with a view to the preservation and welfare of individuals. Others are subordinate to benevolence, and given in order to secure and promote the happiness of the species. The occasion for them arises entirely from our present deficiencies and weaknesses. Reason alone, did we possess it in a higher degree, would answer all the ends of them. — Thus there would be no need of the *parental affection*, were all parents sufficiently acquainted with the reasons for taking upon them the guidance and support of those, whom nature has placed under their care, and were they virtuous enough to be always determined by those reasons. And, in all other instances of particular, implanted principles; it is plain, that there is a certain degree of knowledge and goodness, which, if men possessed, they would be rendered superfluous.

'Tis incumbent on those who see this, and can thus regard *appetite*, as, in the design of nature, merely ministerial, and supplemental to *reason*, and necessary only on the account of its absence or imperfections, to labour to im-

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prove

prove it, and to extend its influence as much as possible; to learn more and more, in all instances, to substitute it in the room of *appetite*, and to diminish continually the occasion for instinctive principles in themselves. — All the inferior orders of creatures, and men themselves, during their first years, have no other guide than *instinct*. The further men advance in existence, and the wiser and better they grow, the more (we plainly see) they are disengaged from it. And there may be numberless orders of superior beings, who are absolutely above it, and under the sole influence and guidance of reason.

We cannot, indeed, considering the present weak and imperfect state of human reason, sufficiently admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in the provision he has made against the evils which would arise from hence, by particular, *instinctive determinations*. As long as men have not that wisdom which would ascertain their taking regularly the sustenance necessary for their support, upon barely knowing it to be proper at certain intervals; how kind is it to remind them of it, and urge them to it, by the uneasy and constantly returning solicitations of *hunger*? As it is probable, they would not be sufficiently engaged to the relief
of

of the miserable, without the tender sympathy and impulses of *compassion*; how properly are *these* given them? And as, in like manner, if left to mere reason, the care of their offspring would be little attended to; how wisely are they tied to them by the *parental fondness*, and prevented from neglecting them, without doing the most unnatural violence to themselves?

In general; were we trusted wholly with the care of ourselves, and was our benevolence determined alike to all mankind; or no further, to particular persons, according to our different relations to them, than unassisted reason would determine it; what confusion would ensue? What desolation and misery would be soon introduced into human affairs?

How evidently, therefore, do the wisdom and benevolence of our Maker appear in the frame of our natures? — 'Tis true, that these very principles, the necessity of which, to the preservation and happiness of the species, we so evidently see, often prove, in event, the causes of many grievous evils, and the most dreadful calamities. But they are plainly *intended* for *good*. These evils are the *accidental*, not the *proper and direct* consequences of them. They proceed from the unnatural abuse and corrup-

tion of them; and happen entirely through our own fault and folly, contrary to what appears to be the will and constitution of our Maker. It is impossible to produce one instance, in which the original and ultimate direction of nature is to evil; or to any thing not, upon the whole, best.

I am not at all solicitous, about determining nicely, in all cases, what in our natures is to be resolved to instinct, and what not. It is sufficient, if it appears, that the most important of our desires and affections are deducible from a less precarious and higher original.

C H A P. IV.

Of our Ideas of good and ill Desert.

IT is needless to say any thing to shew, that the ideas of good and ill desert, necessarily arise in us upon considering certain actions and characters; or, that we conceive virtue as always *worthy*, and vice as the contrary. Tho' these ideas will be found to be really a species of the ideas of right and wrong; yet, as they are commonly considered and applied, there is
this

this difference between them. The epithets, *right* and *wrong* are, with strict propriety, applied to actions themselves; but *good* and *ill desert* belong rather to the agent, than his actions. 'Tis the agent alone, who is the subject of happiness or misery; and, therefore, it is he alone that properly can be said to *deserve* these.

I apprehend no great difficulty in determining, in general, the nature and original of these ideas. They plainly suppose virtue practised, or neglected, and regard the treatment due to beings in consequence of this. They represent the propriety or fitness which we discern, in making virtuous agents happy, and discountenancing the vicious and corrupt. When we say, a man *deserves* well, we mean, that his character is such, that we *approve* of shewing him *peculiar favour*; or that it is *right* he should be happier than if he had been of another character. We cannot but love a virtuous agent, and desire his happiness above that of others. Reason determines at once, that he ought to be the better for his virtue; that he ought to be treated differently from others, and differently from the manner in which he himself would have been treated, had he been guilty, or only barely innocent.—A vicious be-

ing, on the contrary, as such, we cannot but hate and condemn. Our concern for his happiness is necessarily, so far, diminished; nor can any truth appear more clearly and self-evidently to our minds, than that it is *wrong* he should prosper in his wickedness, or that happiness should be conferred on him, in the same manner, and to the same degree, as it is on others of amiable characters; or as it would have been conferred on himself, had he been righteous and upright.

Different characters require different treatment. Virtue affords a reason for communicating additional happiness to the agent; vice is a reason for withdrawing favour, or for punishing. — This seems to be very intelligible. But in order further to explain this point, it is necessary to observe particularly, that the *whole* foundation of the sentiments now mentioned, is by no means this; “the tendency of virtue to the happiness of the world, and of vice to its misery; or the publick utility of the one, and inutility of the other.” — We have an *immediate* approbation of making the virtuous happy, and discouraging the vicious, abstracted from all consequences. Were there but two beings in the universe, one of whom was virtuous, the other

other wicked ; or, were we to conceive two such beings, in other respects equal, governed apart from the rest of the world, and removed for ever from the notice of all other creatures ; we should still approve of a different treatment of them. That the good being should be less happy, or, upon the whole, a greater sufferer than his evil fellow-being, would appear wrong to us.

Suppose a person had any particular good or benefit to communicate, and that the only consideration left to determine to which of two competitors it shall be given, is their contrary moral characters ; what room would there be here for hesitation ? What wise and disinterested person would not immediately determine in favour of the virtuous character ? Or will any one say, that he would want all reason for such a determination, and be necessarily indifferent on which he bestowed the supposed good, if there were no other beings in the world ; or if he knew that all memory of the fact would be immediately lost ; or that, in any other way, all ill effects of his determination on the world would be prevented ? The virtuous person, every one would say, is *worthy* of the benefit ; the other *unworthy* : That is, their respective characters are such, that it is

right it should be conferred on the one, *rather* than the other. But, why *right*? Not merely on account of the effects; (which, in these instances, we are far from taking time always to consider) but *immediately and ultimately right*; and, for the same reason that beneficence is right, and that things and relations, in general, are what they are.

The moral worth or *merit* of an agent, then, is, "his integrity and virtue, considered as
 "implying the suitableness or fitness, that good
 "should be communicated to him preferably
 "to others; and as disposing all observers to
 "esteem, and love him, and study his happiness." — Virtue naturally, and of itself, recommends to favour and happiness, qualifies for them, and renders the being possessed of it, the proper object of encouragement and reward. 'Tis, in a like sense, we say that a person, who has been a benefactor to another, *deserves* well of him; that benefits received ought to be acknowledged and recompensed; and that the person who bestows them is, preferably to others, the proper object of our regard and benevolence.

I deny not, but that one thing of great importance, upon which is grounded the fitness of countenancing virtue, and discountenancing

vice,

vice, among reasonable beings, is, the manifest tendency of this to prevent misery, and to preserve order and happiness in the world. All that I assert is, that it is not the *only* thing that renders such a procedure right; but that, setting aside the consideration of what a public interest would require, it would still, though with some difference in the degree and manner, remain right to make a distinction between the lots and circumstances of the virtuous and vicious. Vice is of *essential demerit*, and virtue *in itself rewardable*. For, once more, let us imagine an order of reasonable beings, made to pass through a particular stage of existence, at the end of which they are annihilated *: Among whom, during the period they existed, no distinction was made on account of their different characters: Virtue was not favoured, nor vice punished: Happiness and misery were distributed promiscuously; the guilty generally easy, prosperous, and flourishing; the good, as generally, afflicted, and often robbed of every enjoyment, and brought to untimely ends by their virtue, or by the oppression and cruelties of their more happy, though *wicked fellow-beings*: The most

* As men are, supposing no future state,

wicked,

wicked, generally, the *least* sufferers ; and the most upright, the *least* happy. Notwithstanding all these things, the quantity of pleasure or good enjoyed by the whole order, and by every single individual of it, may be conceived greatly to exceed the ill. But will any one say, that, were there no connexion between such an order of beings and the rest of the universe, there would not be any thing in the disposition of its events and affairs, that would be wrong ? It will be said probably, for nothing else can be said with reason, “ that such a state, or order of things, cannot be approved by us, because there would have been more happiness in the system supposed, if every thing in it had happened agreeably to the rules of distributive justice.” But is it so easy and unavoidable to see this, that every one’s disapprobation must be immediately determined by it ? Or is it impossible that things should have been so disposed at first, and such a scheme and course of things carried on for a time, as that this might not have been true ? Or, allowing the unreasonableness of making such a supposition, do we always conceive of God, as obliged, *in every single instance*, to produce all the happiness possible, and operate to the utmost extent of his

his power? Is there no greater harm, or other kind of wrong, in a system of beings so governed, than in producing a *smaller* quantity of happiness rather than a *greater*; creating an earth, for instance, of the size of ours, rather than one bigger, and, consequently, capable of supporting a greater number of inhabitants? Or, are all things relating to this system, and its affairs, ordered as equitably and well, and as much to the satisfaction of our minds, as if there had been in it, upon the whole, the same quantity of happiness, but distributed according to the moral characters of the beings?

In the case of a single, solitary, evil being, it may be perhaps very true, that the only thing that could justify putting him into a state of positive, absolute misery, would be its conduciveness to his reformation. But then the reason why we approve of using methods to accomplish his reformation, is not merely this; that it is expedient to his happiness. For were this true, we should equally approve the following things; *punishing* him, and thus bringing him to a sense of his duty, and, in consequence of this, to happiness; or so originally constituting his frame, and ordering his circumstances of being, as that, though unrestrained

strained in his vices, he should enjoy, for the designed period of his existence, the same quantity of pleasure; or (supposing this impossible) so over-ruling, in various ways, the effects of his wickedness, making such impressions upon his mind, granting him such a succession of agreeable sensations, fixing him in a situation of so much external affluence and delight, and conferring so many extraordinary favours and blessings upon him, as shall make up, or, in any degree, more than make up, for any sufferings, or diminution of happiness, necessarily arising from his guilt. — Is there nothing to chuse between these methods of making a being happy? Supposing the same quantity of happiness enjoyed, is it indifferent whether a being enjoys it in a course of obstinate, perverse wickedness, or of virtue? — It would be extravagant to assert, that there is no *possible* method, whereby a being can, in any degree, escape the hurtful effects of his vices, or lose the happy effects of his virtue. We see enough in the present world to convince us of the contrary.

There are several questions, which may be asked, on the subject of this chapter. There are many particular cases and different circumstances

stances of agents and of guilt, in which it may be difficult, or impossible, for us to determine what is right to be done, and what is not: nor is it at all necessary to my present purpose that I should take notice of them. 'Tis sufficient, if I have, in general, justly explained good and ill desert; and if, from the considerations proposed, it appears, that virtue is essentially and necessarily a *proper* object of *favour*, vice of *discouragement*; and that the *rewardableness* of the one, and the *demerit* of the other, are instances of absolute and eternal rectitude, the ideas of which arise in us *immediately* upon the consideration of virtuous and vicious characters, appear always along with them, and are, by no means, wholly coincident with or resolvable into views of publick *utility* and *inutility*.

Upon this perception of good and ill desert, is founded the passion of resentment; the hopes unavoidably springing up in every virtuous mind; and the presaging terrors and anticipations of punishment accompanying a consciousness of guilt.

Let me add; that there is no preception of our minds which it becomes us more to attend to, than this. It points out to us clearly, the way to happiness and the conditions of it. It
is

is seeing and knowing, that according to just order and equity, sin is the forfeiture of all our expectations of good; and virtue, the ground of the highest hope. — Considered, merely, as a principle of the natures given us by God, or as a sentiment and determination which we find essential to our minds, and interwoven with our frame; it implies a declaration from the author of our minds, of his will and intentions; it acquaints us how he will deal with us, and what treatment we may expect from him, according to our respective characters; or upon what the exercise of his goodness to us is suspended. — But, considered as a necessary perception of reason, it *demonstrates* to us what the *supreme reason* will do; what laws and rules it observes in carrying on the happiness of the universe; and that it is not simply happiness it has in view, but “happiness enjoyed with virtue *.”

* “Perhaps divine goodness, with which, if I mistake
 “not, we make very free in our speculations, may not
 “be a bare single disposition to produce happiness; but a
 “disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest
 “man happy. Perhaps an infinitely perfect mind may
 “be pleased, with seeing his creatures behave suitably to
 “the nature he has given them; to the relations in which
 “he has placed them to each other; and to that which
 “they stand in to himself: that relation to himself, which,
 “during their existence, is even necessary, and [which

Before

Before we proceed to the next chapter, I cannot help desiring the reader, once more, to reflect, particularly, on that reverse of things and of nature, which is possible, and which might have obtained, if the scheme I have opposed be true, or if the foundation of morals I have espoused be imaginary and impossible. Let him try to convince, of the world, and all our ideas of good, of morality, of perfection, and of the Deity as inverted; the principal subjects of the consideration of our minds, as not *being* what they now *seem* to be, but as perceived by all intelligent beings, in a manner and *under notions*, entirely contrary: what is now approved and esteemed, as disapproved and hated: all that is now contemplated as *fit*, as *just*, as *worthy*, as *amiable and excellent*, appearing *evil and base*: cruelty, impiety, ingratitude and treachery apprehended to be *virtue*; and beneficence, piety, gratitude and faithfulness, to be *wickedness*: The very

“is the most important one of all: perhaps, I say, an infinitely perfect mind may be pleased with this moral piety of moral agents, in and for itself; as well as upon account of its being essentially conducive to the happiness of his creation.” See Butler’s *Analogy*. Part I. Ch. 2.

displeasure

displeasure and aversion arising in us from considering the former, produced by the latter: respect and love excited by ill offices; contempt and resentment by acts of kindness: misery, private and publick, conveying the same sentiments which happiness now conveys; prevailing in the same degree throughout the world, and chosen and pursued with the same universal approbation and ardour: *virtue*, conceived as having demerit; and *vice*, as well deserving and rewardable. — Can these things be? Is there nothing in any of them repugnant to the natures of things?

C H A P. V.

Of the reference of Morality to the divine nature ; the Rectitude of our Faculties, and the Grounds of Belief.

MORALITY has been represented as necessary and immutable. There is an objection to this, which to some has appeared of considerable weight, and which it will be proper for us to examine.

It may seem “ that this is setting up something distinct from God, which is independent of him, and equally eternal and necessary.”

It is easy to see that this difficulty affects morality, no more than it does all truth. If for this reason, we must give up the unalterable natures of right and wrong, and make them dependent on the divine will ; we must, for the same reason, deny any thing to be necessarily true, and assert the possibility of contradictions ; that is, the possibility of impossibilities ; our only idea of an impossibility, being ; “ what implies a contradiction.”

What I have hitherto aimed at has

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been, to prove that morality is a branch of *necessary truth*, and has the same foundation with it. If this is allowed, the main point will be settled, and we may be very well contented that truth and morality should stand and fall together. We cannot however pursue this subject far enough, or trace morality to its source, without entering particularly into the consideration of the difficulty now proposed; which naturally occurs in all enquiries of this sort.

In the first place, therefore, let it be observed, that some things there certainly are which we must allow not to be dependent on the will of God. Such as; this will itself; his own existence; his eternity and immensity; the difference between power and impotence, wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood, existence and nonexistence. To suppose these dependent on his will, is so extravagant and shocking, that I dare say no one will assert it, who will bestow any thought on the subject. It would plainly imply, that he is a changeable and precarious being, and render it impossible to form any rational or consistent ideas, of his existence, and attributes. But these things must be the creatures of will, if all truth be

so. — There is another view of this notion, which also shews that it overthrows the divine attributes and existence. For,

Secondly, Mind supposes truth; and intelligence, something intelligible. Wisdom supposes certain objects about which it is conversant; and knowledge, knowables. — An eternal, necessary *mind* supposes eternal, necessary *truth*; and infinite knowledge, infinite knowables. If then there were no infinite knowables; no eternal, necessary, independent * truths; there could be no infinite, independent, necessary *mind* or *intelligence*; because there would be nothing to be certainly and eternally known and understood. Just as, if there were nothing *possible*, there could be no *power*; or, if there were no necessary *infinity* of possibles, there could be no necessary, *infinite* power; because power supposes objects, and eternal, necessary, infinite power, an infinity of things eternally and necessarily *possible*.

In like manner, it may be said, that if there were no *moral distinctions*, there could be no *moral attributes in the Deity*. If there were nothing eternally and unalterably right and wrong, there could be nothing meant by his

* Αἰδία νοητά.

eternal, unalterable rectitude or holiness.—'Tis evident, therefore, that annihilating truth, possibility, or moral differences, is indeed annihilating all mind, all power, all goodness; and that so far as we make the former precarious, dependent, or limited; so far we make the latter so too.

Hence we see clearly, that to conceive of truth as depending on the divine will, is to conceive of his intelligence and knowledge as depending on his will. And is it possible, that any can prefer this to the opinion, that, on the contrary, his *will* (which, from the nature of it, admits of, and *requires something* to guide and determine it) is dependent on, or regulated by, his *understanding*? What can be more preposterous, than to make the Deity nothing but will; and to exalt this, to the subversion of all his other attributes?

But it may still be urged, that these observations remove not the proposed difficulty; but rather strengthen and fix it. We are yet left to conceive of "certain things distinct from God, which are necessary and independent; and on which too his existence and attributes are founded; and without which, we cannot so much as form any idea of them."

I answer; we ought to distinguish between the *will* of God and his *nature*. It by no means follows, because they are independent of his *will*, that they are properly distinct from him, and independent of his *nature*. To conceive thus of them, would indeed involve us in the greatest absurdities and inconsistencies. Wherever, or in whatever objects, *necessity* and *infinity* occur to our thoughts, the divine, eternal nature and perfections are to be acknowledged; to which nothing of this kind can be unallied.—The truth, therefore, is, that the objects we are now contemplating, are not things detached from, or independent of, the Deity; but different views, modes, or attributes of his nature.

We shall, I fancy, be more willing to own this, when we have attentively considered what truth and possibility are, and how amazing their nature and extent. They open a prospect before us, which is, in all respects, unbounded. Our thoughts are here lost in an unfathomable abyss, where we find room for an everlasting progress, and where the very notion of arriving at a point, beyond which there is nothing further, implies a contradiction. There is no end of what is perceivable and discoverable. There is a proper infinity of in-

telligible or ideal essences and verities *possible* to be known; and of systems, worlds, and scenes of being, perception, order, and art, wholly inconceivable to finite minds, *possible* to be displayed and exhibited *. This infinity of truth and possibility we cannot in thought destroy. Do what we will, it always returns upon us. Every thought, and every idea of every mind; every kind of agency and power, and every degree of intellectual improvement and pre-eminence amongst all reasonable beings, suppose and imply its necessary, unchangeable existence. — Can this be any thing, besides the divine, uncreated, infinite *reason and power*, from whence all other reason and power are derived, thus offering themselves to our minds, and forcing us to see and acknowledge them? What is the true conclusion from what has been said, and the whole meaning of it; but that there is an incomprehensible *first* wisdom, knowledge, and power *necessarily existing*; which contain in themselves all things, from which all things sprung, and

* It was, in all probability, something of this kind, and not modern *Pantheism*, or *Spinozism*, that some of the antients meant, when they represented God, as being all things; as the unchangeable and infinite *το ον* and *εις ον*. See Dr. Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, Vol. I.

upon which all things depend? — There is nothing so intimate with us, so blended with our thoughts, and one with our natures, as God. He is included, as appears, in all our conceptions, and necessary to all the operations of our minds: Nor could he be *necessarily existent*, were not this true of him. For it is implied in the idea of *necessary existence*, that it is fundamental to all other existence, and presupposed in every notion we can frame of every thing. — In short, it seems very plain, that truth having always a reference to mind; infinite, eternal truth implies an infinite, eternal mind: And that, not being itself a *substance*, nor yet *nothing*, it must be a *mode of a substance*; or the *essential wisdom and intelligence of the one, necessary Being*.

'Tis worth observing, that, in this way of considering things, we have a kind of intuition of the *unity* of God. Infinite, abstract truth is essentially one. This is no less clear of truth, than it is of infinite space or duration*.

* More than one infinite space or duration, no person can think conceivable, or possible. Such, likewise, will appear to him, who duly considers this subject, the connexion between all the parts of truth, as well as between those of space, that we cannot conceive of them as separable; or annihilate one abstract truth, without annihilating the whole.

When we have fixed our thoughts on universal, infinite truth, and afterwards try to imagine a *second*, or *another* infinity of it; we find ourselves endeavouring absurdly to imagine *another* infinity of the *same* truth. It is self-evident, then, that there can be but one infinite mind. Infinite truth supposes, and infers the existence of one, infinite essence, as its seat or *substratum*, and but one: Were there more, they would not be *necessary*. — Particular truths, contemplated at the same time by many different minds, are, on this account, no more different, than the present moment of duration is different in one place from what it is in another; or, than the sun is different, because viewed at the same time by myriads of eyes. — All created minds contemplating truth, and enquiring into the natures of things, are to be considered as all employed in viewing and examining one and the same *original*, *omnipotent intelligence*, or *eternal reason*.

Let it be remembered here, that in universal, necessary truth, are included the comparative natures of happiness and misery; the *right* in producing the one, and the *wrong* in producing the other; and, in general, *moral* truth, moral fitness and excellence, and all that is *best* to be done in all cases, and with re-
spect

spect to all the variety of actual or possible things and worlds. — This is the necessary moral disposition, or *goodness* of the divine nature. — It demonstrates, that, in the divine intelligence, absolute rectitude is included ; and that the eternal, infinite power and reason are in essential conjunction with, and imply complete, moral perfection, and, particularly, infinite *Benevolence* *. It shews us, that whenever we transgress truth and right, or deviate from goodness, we immediately affront that God, who is truth and goodness ; and that, on the contrary, whenever we are influenced to action by these, or determine ourselves agreeably to them, we pay immediate homage to him.

From the whole it is plain, that none have any reason to be offended, when *morality* is represented as eternal and immutable ; for it appears that it is not asserting, that there is any thing distinct from God, which is eternal and necessary, and independent of him ; but “ re-
“ solving all to his nature, founding all ulti-

* *Ratio profecta à rerum natura, & ad recte faciendum impellens, & à delicto avocans : quæ non tum denique incipit lex esse, cum scripta est, sed. tum cum orta est: orta autem simul est cum mente divina. Cic. de Leg. Lib. ii. — Ita principem legem illam & ultimam, mentem esse omnia ratione aut cogentis aut vetantis Dei. Ibid. — λογῶ ορθῶ πειθεσθαι καὶ θεῶταλον εἶναι.* Hier. Carm. Pythag. ~~αὐτῶν~~

“mately on this; and asserting this only to
“be eternal, necessary, and independent †.”

The same kind of reasoning, with some that I have above used, has been, by Dr. *Clark*, applied, (and I think justly) to *space and duration*: But these sentiments are more particularly countenanced and supported by Dr. *Cudworth*, who has considered the same difficulty with that now considered, and given a like solution of it. Yet it would be vain to expect that what is here advanced, will be much received: One can scarce hope, indeed, that the authority of these great men, (and also of the admirable *Plato* *, and several of the wisest of the

† The high and sacred original of virtue is therefore God himself, who “is all in all; the sole fountain of all that is true, right or perfect.” The words of Dr. *Sharp*, in one of his Letters to Mrs. *Cockburn* on the foundation of Virtue. See the works of the latter, vol. ii.

* Those who are acquainted with *Plato*’s writings, know that he represents the ideas, or abstract, universal, intelligible essences of things, as the only seat of truth, the only objects of knowledge, certainty, and mind, and the only things that most properly deserve the name of entity. Here only, according to him, can we find *unity*; it being plainly impossible to conceive of more than *one species* or intelligible idea of a triangle, or of any other object of the understanding. These likewise he represents as the originals and exemplars of all particular, existent things; as eternal and incorruptible, above all motion and mutation, and making up together the *one, infinite, first intelligence*, or TO ON. Particular sensible things, on the contrary, he represents as
ancient

ancient philosophers, who have delivered sentiments not very different from these) will prove sufficient to save it from even the ridicule with which, it is likely, some will be ready to treat it.

There is, perhaps, no subject where more must be trusted to every person's own attentive consideration; where the deficiencies of language are more sensible; or on which it is more difficult to write, so as to be entirely understood. Many needless disputes and impertinent objections would be prevented, on this as well as on all other subjects, would men be

being nothing fixt, or permanent in themselves; but the seats of multiplicity, generation, and motion; the objects not of *knowledge*, but of *opinion and imagination*; and to be looked upon as rather *shadows* of things, than as *things, entities or realities*. — He ridicules those *earth-born men*, (*γῆγενεῖς*, in *Sophista*) as he styles them, who rejecting all invisible, incorporeal essences, and abstract ideas, (*νοῦτα, ἀμετακίνητα, ἀσώματα, καὶ ἀσχετὰ εἶδη*. *Ibid.*) allow nothing to have any existence besides the objects of sense and fancy, or what they can see and handle: and says, that those who have not learnt to look above all sensibles and individuals to abstract truth, and the natures of things, to beauty or good itself; are not to be ranked amongst true philosophers, but among the ignorant, the vulgar, and blind.— What he has delivered to this purpose, though not free from errors, and carried into mysticism and jargon by the latter *Platonists*, contains, I think, one of the profoundest parts of his philosophy, and was so considered by himself. See the note at the conclusion of the first chap.

so candid as always to attend more to what is meant, than to the accuracy of the expressions.

A great deal might have been added to what has been said, and the whole argument, now very imperfectly touched, explained at large and pursued throughout, would, I think, contain one of the highest and noblest speculations possible

There has been another difficulty started *, in which morality, in common with all other subjects, is concerned, which will be proper for our present examination. It has been asked, “whether the truth of all our knowledge, does not suppose the true or right make of our faculties? whether it is not possible, that these might have been so constituted, as unavoidably to deceive us in all our notions? and how we can know that this is not actually the case?”

Some may imagine, that these enquiries propose difficulties to us which are impossible to be surmounted, and that we are here tied down to a state of universal and invincible scepticism. For, “how are we to make out the truth of

*It is probable I should not have taken much notice of this difficulty, had I not found it considered by Dr. Cudworth at the end of his treatise of *eternal and immutable morality*; and resolved, in a manner, I judged not quite clear and satisfactory.

“ our faculties, but by these very suspected
“ faculties themselves ? and how vain would
“ be such an attempt ? where could it leave
“ us but where it found us ? ” — It may be ob-
served, that it is not only us, but the whole
rational creation, who are thus reduced to
everlasting scepticism : Nay, that it must be
impossible, God should make any creature,
who shall be able to satisfy himself concerning
any thing, or believe so much as his own
existence. For what satisfaction or informa-
tion can he obtain, in any case, but by the in-
tervention of his faculties ? and how shall he
know that they are not delusive ? — These are
very strange consequences ; but let us see what
may be said more directly to the point.

First, They are our faculties which inform
us of this difficulty ; and therefore if we do not
know that there is any regard due to them,
there can be no regard due to this difficulty.
It will appear presently to be a contradiction,
to suppose that our faculties can teach us uni-
versally to suspect themselves.

Secondly, Our natures are such, that whatever
we see, or think we see, prevailing evidence
against, we *cannot* believe. If then there should
appear to us, on the whole, any evidence
against the supposition, that our faculties are
so

so contrived as always to deceive us, we are obliged to reject it. Evidence must produce conviction proportioned to the imagined degree of it ; and conviction is inconsistent with suspicion. It will signify nothing to urge that no evidence in this case can be regarded, because discovered by our suspected faculties ; for, we cannot suspect, we cannot in any case doubt *without* reason, or *against* reason. Doubting supposes evidence ; and there cannot, therefore, be any such thing as doubting, whether evidence itself is to be regarded. If any Man doubts of the veracity of his faculties, it must be upon their own authority and credit ; that is, at the very time, *and in the very act of suspecting them*, he *trusts* them. As nothing is more plainly self destructive and contradictory, than to attempt to *prove* by reason, that reason deserves no credit, or to assert that we have *reason* for thinking, that there is no such thing as *reason* ; it is, certainly, no less so, to pretend, that we have reason to *doubt*, whether reason is to be regarded ; or, which comes to the same, whether apparent evidence or our faculties are to be regarded. And, as far as any will acknowledge they have no reason to doubt, so far it will be ridiculous for them to pretend to doubt.

These

These observations alone might be sufficient on this subject, for they shew us that the point in debate is a point we are obliged to take for granted, and which is not capable of being questioned. But yet, however trifling and absurd it may seem after what has been said, it will be of some use to point out more particularly the meaning of this enquiry, "may not our faculties always deceive us?" And to shew what the evidence really is which we have for the contrary.

Let it be considered then further, that it is impossible what *is* not, or (which is all one) what is not *true*, should be *perceived*. Now, it is certain, that there are a great variety of things which we *think* we perceive; and, the whole question, consequently, is, whether we *really* perceive these things or not; whether the faculty employed in considering truth, does indeed ever perceive truth, or is so unhappily by-assed and blinded, as necessarily and universally to mistake.

The existence of absolute truth is supposed in the objection, otherwise it would be wholly without sense and meaning. Suspicion of our faculties and fear of being deceived evidently imply it; nor can we deny, that it exists, without contradicting ourselves; for it would be
to

to assert, that it is true, that nothing is true. The same may be said of *doubting* whether there is any thing true; for doubting denotes a hesitation or suspense of the mind, about the truth or reality of what is doubted of; and, therefore, a tacit acknowledgment that there is somewhat true. Take away this, and there is no idea of it left *. So impossible is universal scepticism; and so necessarily does truth remain, even after we have taken it away. There being then truth perceivable, we are unavoidably led to believe, that we *may*, and that, in many instances, we *do* perceive it; no reason being assignable, for suspecting the contrary.

But it is most to the purpose to observe, in pursuance of what was just said, that to doubt of the rectitude of our faculties, is to doubt, whether our reason is so situated, as to misrepresent every object of science to us; whether we ever *know*, or only *imagine* we know; whether, for example, we *actually perceive*, or only *fancy* that we perceive a circle to be different from a triangle, number not to be extension, or the whole bigger than a part.

As far as we cannot doubt of these things, or find ourselves forced to think we *perceive*

* Thus ignorance implies something to be known, and doubting about the way to a place, that there is a way.

them;

them ; so far we cannot doubt our faculties ; so far we are forced to think them right.—

It appears, therefore, that we have all the reason for believing our faculties, that we have for believing any self-evident truths ; or for believing that we have any real perceptions.—

Whatever we perceive, we perceive as it is ; and to perceive nothing as it is, is to perceive nothing at all, that is, not to exist. A mind cannot be without ideas, and ideas it cannot have without perceiving them ; and as far as it perceives them, it perceives truth ; it being impossible, that it should perceive them to be what they are not. It makes no difference what these ideas are, for though they represent nothing actually existing, yet they are still equally subjects of truth, equally adequate and complete in themselves, and of perfect and determined natures.

Observations of this kind will shew us that the following things are impossible to infinite power, in regard to our faculties and perceptions.

First, No being can be made who shall perceive falsehood. What is false, is nothing. Error is always the effect, not of perception, but of the want of it. As far as our perceptions go, they must correspond to the truth of things.

Secondly, No being can be made who shall have *different* ideas, and yet not *conceive* them to be different ; for instance, who shall have the distinct ideas of a triangle and a circle together in his understanding, and yet consider them as the same *. To *have* these or any other ideas ; to contemplate them, to take notice of or be conscious of them in the mind, without seeing them different, and being conscious of their difference ; is to have, them and at the same time not to have them.—From hence it follows, that there can be no rational beings, who shall not perceive and acknowledge many of the truths we call self-evident, and which are included in the ideas themselves, or the observed difference between them. To have the ideas of a whole and a part, and to see the one to be *bigger* than the other, is the same ; which is true likewise of the idea of matter, and seeing it to be *extended, figured and*

* We may misname our ideas, or imagine that an idea present at one time in our minds, is the same with one different from it, that was present at another, and thus fall into great mistakes and confusion. But no one can conceive, that a being, contemplating at the *same* time two ideas, can then think them not two, but the same. He cannot contemplate two ideas, without being *conscious* of doing it ; and he cannot be *conscious* of doing it, without knowing them to be different, and having a complete view and discernment of them, as far as they are *his* ideas.

moveable ; of the ideas of two figures, and an exact coincidence between them in all their parts when laid on one another, and seeing them to be *equal* ; and so on, of other axioms and principles of human knowledge. Our satisfaction about these, being thus not dependent on an arbitrary frame of our minds, it will follow, that the same is true, of what we can make out by demonstration, which is only the self-evident application of self-evident principles, or a chain of intuitions implying a proposed truth. And though memory is a good deal depended on in most demonstrations, which some represent as possible to be so ordered as to be always fallacious ; yet, in many instances, little or no use of memory is necessary, but the whole argumentation may lie before the mind in one view.

In a word, either there are things, which, after the fullest consideration, we are forced to think that we perceive and know, or there are not. There are probably none who will assert the latter ; and declare seriously, there is nothing they find themselves under any necessity of believing. Were there any such, they would be incapable of being reasoned with, nor would it be to any purpose to tell them, that this very declaration gives itself the lye.— If, therefore, there are things, which we,

think we perceive, it is the most contemptible absurdity and inconsistency, to pretend, at the same time, to doubt of the rectitude of our understandings with respect to these things; that is, to *doubt* whether we perceive them or not.—Thinking we are right, believing, and thinking our faculties right, are one and the same. He that says, he doubts whether his eyes do not always deceive him, cannot without contradicting himself, say, he *believes* he ever sees any external objects. If we have a necessary determination to believe at all, we have a necessary determination to believe our faculties; and in the degree we *believe* them, we cannot *distrust* them; unless these two things are reconcileable; believing the report of another, and questioning whether any credit is due to him; or taking for real what we see through a telescope, and doubting whether it is not so constructed as to misrepresent all objects to us, or as to shew us only visionary prospects. An expression then which has been used should be inverted, and instead of saying, “upon supposition my faculties are duly made, “I am sure of such and such things;” it should be said, “I am sure of such and such truths; “and, therefore, I am in the same degree sure my “faculties inform me rightly.” On the whole, it appears undeniably, that, to suspect our faculties,

in the manner and sense now opposed, is to suspect, not only *without* reason, but *against* all reason.

Shall it be still objected; "I have found myself mistaken in *many* cases; and how shall I know but I may be so in *all*?" — I answer; look into yourself, examine your own ideas and conceptions. Clearness and distinctness of conception, as you have or want them, are what will and must satisfy you, when you are right, and when it is possible you may be wrong. Do not you really know, that you are not deceived, when you think, that when equals are taken from equals, the remainder will be equal? Can you entertain the least doubt, whether the body of the sun is bigger than it appears to the naked eye? or is it any reason for questioning this, that you once may have thought otherwise? Is it reasonable, because you have judged wrong in *some* cases through ignorance, haste, prejudice, or partial views, to suspect that you judge wrong in *all* cases, however clear? Because, through bodily indisposition or other causes, our senses *sometimes* misrepresent outward objects to us, are they *for ever* to be discredited? Because we sometimes dream, must it be doubtful whether we are ever awake? Because one man imposed upon us, are we to conclude that no

faith is due to any human testimony? or because our memories have deceived us with respect to some events, must we question whether we remember right what happened the last moment? *

* Conclusions of this sort, (as strange as they may seem) have been actually drawn; and it has been asserted, that because in adding together a long series of numbers, we are liable to err, we cannot be sure that we are right in the addition of the smallest numbers; and, therefore, not in reckoning twice two, to be four.

Another sceptical argument, which has been insisted on, is this: In every judgment we can form, besides the uncertainty attending the original consideration of the subject itself; there is another derived from the consideration of the fallibility of our faculties, and the past instances in which we have been mistaken; to which must be added a third uncertainty, derived from the possibility of error in this estimation we make of the fidelity of our faculties; and to this a fourth of the same kind, and so on *in infinitum*; till at last the first evidence, by a constant diminution of it, must be reduced to nothing. See Mr. *Hume's Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. I. p. 315, &c. As much of this very strange reasoning as is not above my comprehension, proves just the reverse of what was intended by it. For let it be acknowledged, that the consideration of the fallibility of our understandings, and the instances in which they have deceived us, necessarily diminishes our assurance of the rectitude of our sentiments; the subsequent reflexion on the uncertainty attending this judgment which we make of our faculties, diminishes not, but contributes to restore to its first strength, our original assurance; because the more precarious a judgment or probability unfavourable to another appears, the less must be its effect in weakening it.

But

But let it, for this or any other reason, be granted *possible*, that all our recollections are wrong, all our opinions false, and all our knowledge delusion; still, there will be only a bare *possibility* against all sense, reason, evidence, and the whole weight and bent of our minds obliging us to think the contrary. 'Tis not in our power to pay the least regard to a simple *may be*, in opposition to *any* apparent evidence †, much less in opposition to the *strongest*. — Let it be admitted further, that there may be a set of rational beings in a state of necessary and total deception, or to whom nothing of truth and reality ever appears; though this be absolutely impossible, the same, as I have before observed, with supposing them to be void of all intellectual perception, and inconsistent with the very idea of their existence, as thinking and reasonable beings; yet, granting this, we cannot help thinking, that it is not the case with *us*; and

† How trifling then is it to alledge against any thing, for which there appears to be any degree of prevailing evidence, that, did we know more of the case, *perhaps* we might see evidence for the contrary. 'Tis always a full answer to this, to say; *perhaps* not. — What we are wholly unacquainted with, may, for aught we know, make as much *for* any of our opinions, as *against* them.

that such beings can by no means think and perceive as we do.

To add no more; what things *seem* to us, we must take them to *be*; and whatever our faculties inform us of, we must give credit to.

I have dwelt, I fear, longer on this point than was necessary. But I could not omit taking notice of what seemed so nearly to affect the authority and credit of all our sentiments and conclusions. And, from the observations which have been made, we may perhaps learn, that it deserves no regard, and that much of the scepticism which has been professed and defended, is either mere affectation or self-deception.

I shall conclude this chapter with a few observations on the general grounds of belief and assent. These may be all comprehended under the three following heads.

The *first* is immediate consciousness or feeling. 'Tis absurd to ask a reason, why we believe what we feel. A conscious, thinking, reasonable being must necessarily have a capacity of discovering some things this way. All things it cannot perceive by the intervention of mediums, but some it must perceive immediately, and be inwardly conscious of. 'Tis
from

from hence we acquire the knowledge of our own existence, and of the several operations, passions, and sensations of our minds.

The *second* ground of belief is *Intuition*; by which I mean the mind's survey of its own ideas, and the relations between them, and the notice it takes, by its own innate light and intellectual power, of what absolutely and necessarily is or is not true and false, consistent and inconsistent, possible and impossible in the natures of things. It has been already treated of in the first chapter; and to it we must ascribe our belief of all self-evident truths; our ideas of the general, abstract affections and relations of things; our moral ideas, and whatsoever else we discover, without making use of any process of reasoning. — It is on this power of intuition, essential, in some degree or other, to all rational minds, that the possibility and every step of all reasoning are founded. To it the last appeal is ever made. Many of its perceptions are capable, by due attention, of being rendered clearer and more satisfactory; and many of the truths discovered by it, may be illustrated by an advantageous representation of them, or by being viewed in particular lights; but seldom will admit of proper proof. — Some things there must be,
which

which can appear only by their own light, and which are incapable of proof; otherwise nothing could be proved, or known; in the same manner as, if there were no letters, there could be no words, or if there were no simple and undefinable ideas, there could be no complex ideas. — I might mention some instances of things, that are discernible no other way than *intuitively*, which learned men have strangely confounded and obscured, by treating them as subjects of *reasoning and deduction*. One of the most important instances, the subject of this treatise affords us; and another we have, in our notions of the necessity of a *cause* of whatever begins to exist, or our general ideas of *power and connexion* *: And, sometimes, reasoning has been ridiculously employed to prove even our own existence.

The *third* ground of belief is *Argumentation or Deduction*. This we have recourse to when *Intuition* fails us; and it is, as just now hinted, highly necessary, that we carefully distinguish between these two, mark their differences and limits, and observe what we owe to the one, or the other of them. — Our ideas are such, that, by comparing them amongst

* See the second section of the first chapter, p. 33, &c.
them-

themselves, we can find out numberless truths concerning them, and, consequently, concerning actually existent things, as far as correspondent to them, which would be otherwise undiscoverable. Thus, a particular relation between two ideas, which cannot be discerned by any immediate comparison, or consideration of them, may appear, to the greatest satisfaction, by the help of a proper, intermediate idea, whose relation to each is either self-evident, or made out by some precedent reasoning. — It is very agreeable here to consider, how one truth infers another, and that another, without end; and what vast accessions of knowledge may arise from the addition of but one new idea, by supplying us with a proper medium for discovering the relations and properties of those we before had; which discoveries might themselves help to further discoveries, and these to yet further, and so on.—If one *new idea* may have this effect; what inconceivable improvements may we suppose possible to arise, from the unfolding of one *new sense*, or *latent faculty*? How great is the dignity, and how boundless the capacities, and possible progress and acquisitions, of an intellectual nature?

It

It would be needless to give any instances of knowledge derived from *Argumentation*. All is to be ascribed to it, which we have not received from either of the preceding sources. It is the original of the greatest part of our present information and knowledge, and lays the foundation of present improvement, to which we can set no limits. We shall, hereafter, be more capable of employing it, and it will, in all probability, be vastly more useful to us; though all we now discover by it should be then perfectly intuitive to us. We have no reason to think, that the proportion of our intuitive to our other knowledge, in any future period of our beings, will be greater than it is now. The contrary seems rather to be likely. All is intuition only to the Deity.

It should be observed, that all we believe from any one of these sources, is not equally evident to us. This is obvious with respect to the last, which supplies us with all the degrees of evidence, from that producing full certainty, to the lowest probability. *Intuition*, likewise, is found in very various degrees. 'Tis sometimes clear and perfect, and sometimes faint and wavering. Several propositions in geometry would appear very likely to it, though we had no demonstrations of them. But this

word

word is most frequently applied to what we distinctly, immediately, and certainly perceive, without the possibility of any hesitation.—Neither do feeling and reflexion on ourselves, equally convince us of every thing. They give us the utmost assurance of our own existence; but not so much of many things that pass within us, of the springs of our actions; and the particular nature, ends, tendencies, and workings of our passions and affections, which is sufficiently proved by the disputes on these subjects.

It may be also worth mentioning, that some things we discover only in one of these ways, and some in more, or in all of them. All that we now prove by *Reasoning*, might be still equally thus proved, though it were in the same degree *intuitive* to us, that it may be to beings above us. Intuition is not always incompatible with argumentation, though, when perfect, it always supersedes it; and, when imperfect, is often incapable of receiving any aid from it; and therefore, in such cases, ought to be rested entirely on its own evidence. Every process of reasoning is composed of intuitions, and all the several steps in it are so many distinct intuitions; which, when clear and unquestionable, produce *demonstration and*
cer-

certainty; when otherwise, give rise to *opinion and probability*. Nothing would be of greater advantage to us, in the search of truth, than to take time often to resolve our reasonings into their constituent intuitions; and to observe carefully, what light and evidence attend each, and in what manner, and with what degree of force, they infer the conclusion. Such a custom of analysing our sentiments, and tracing them to their elements and principles, would prevent much error and confusion, and shew us what degree of assent is due to the conclusions we receive, and on what foundation our opinions really stand.

An instance of what is discovered in all the ways above-named, is the existence of matter, and an external world. *Immediate feeling* discovers to us our own organs, and the modifications of them. Some things the soul may surely perceive by being *present* with them. — We have the ideas of matter, of its various properties, textures, and combinations, and of a material world; and we, therefore, see *intuitively* the *possibility* of their existence; for *possibility* of existing is implied in the idea of every object; what is impossible being nothing, and no object of reflexion. — We are conscious of certain impressions made upon us,
and

and of certain notices transmitted to us from without, and know they are produced by some foreign cause. These impressions and notices, it is *possible*, may take their rise from external objects actually existing, and be produced by them. We touch a solid substance, and feel resistance. We see certain impressions made, or images drawn, on our organs of sight, and know they are acted upon by *something*. The resistance made *may be* owing to a resisting body; and the scenes painted before us *may be* derived from a correspondent, external scene, discovering itself to us by means of intermediate matter, in the only way which the nature of the thing admits of. And the *possibility* of these things is, in this case, attended with the *highest probability* of their reality. Supposing an external world, in what better manner could the information of it be communicated to us? What more obviously incredible, than that all the notices conveyed to us by our senses, and all the impressions made upon them, corresponding in all respects so exactly, and, as far as could possibly be antecedently expected, to the supposition of an external world, following one another in such order, and confirming one another in so many ways, should be entirely delusive and visionary?

It

It is, I own, still possible, that matter may not exist; and that all these appearances and notices may be derived immediately and solely from the regular and constant action of the Deity, or of some other invisible and intelligent cause, upon our minds. So also is it possible, that the same face of a die may be thrown a thousand times together; that the planets may not be inhabited, though every particle of matter on the earth abounds with inhabitants; that gravity may not be the power that keeps them in their orbits, though it be certainly the power that keeps the moon in its orbit; and that we may be the *only* beings in the world, and the only effects of divine power, though the greatest reason to conclude the contrary offers itself to us, from the consideration barely of our own existence, and the consequent, *intuitive possibility and likelihood* of the existence of numberless other beings. Analogy and intuition, in these cases, immediately inform us what is fact, and produce conviction, which we cannot resist. — In short, it is *self-evident*, that a *material world*, answerable to our ideas, and to what we feel and see, is *possible*. We have no reason to think that it does not exist. Every thing appears as if it did exist; and against the reality of

of its existence there is nothing but a bare possibility, against actual feeling, and all the evidence, which our circumstances and condition, as embodied spirits, seem capable of.

It is well known, what controversies have of late been raised on this subject; some denying the existence of a material world; while others, not finding it possible seriously to doubt in this case, resolve their conviction into a blind determination given them to believe, which cannot be accounted for. Indeed, the nature and grounds of our conviction in this instance, have not, perhaps, been yet sufficiently explained. It would take me too much out of my way to say much more of them than I have said; and, therefore, I shall only further observe, that the same principles on which the existence of *matter* is opposed, lead us equally to deny the existence of *spiritual beings*. And those, who reject the one, while they believe the other, should tell us, "for what particular reasons they believe there exist any other men, or any beings whatsoever besides themselves."

This dispute, after all, turns chiefly on the question; whether matter, considered as something actually existing *without the mind*, and in-

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dependent

dependent of its perceptions, be possible, or not? For there are few, probably, who, after any consideration, will deny its existence upon any other pretence, than the impossibility of it, in any other sense, than as an idea, mode, or conception of the mind. — It would be wasting time to spend any of it in refuting this. What is indisputable, if it be not so, that whatever is *conceivable*, cannot be *impossible*? What pretence can there be for asserting, that the ideas of *figure, motion, and solid extension* represent *sensations*, which cannot, any more than *colour and sound*, have any real existence *without the mind*, that will not imply the same of every *object* of perception, and of *all external, distinct, and continued existence*? — But it is time to put an end to this chapter, and to proceed to what has a nearer relation to the design of this treatise.

C H A P. VI.

Of Fitness, and moral Obligation, and the various Forms of Expression, which have been used by different Writers in explaining Morality.

AFTER the account that has been given, of the nature and original of our ideas of morality ; it will be easy to perceive the meaning of several terms and phrases, which are used in speaking and writing on this subject.

Fitness and *unfitness* most frequently denote the congruity or incongruity, aptitude or inaptitude of any object or means, to accomplish an end. But when applied to actions, they generally signify the same with *right* and *wrong* ; nor is it often hard to determine in which of these senses, the relative or the absolute, these words are to be understood. 'Tis worth observing, that *fitness*, in the former sense, is equally undefinable with *fitness* in the latter ; or, that it is as impossible to express, in any other than synonymous words,

what we mean by it, when we say, "objects have a *fitness* to one another; some things are *fit* to produce certain effects, or to answer certain purposes," as it is when we say, "reverence to the Deity is *fit*, or beneficence is *fit* to be practised." In the first of these instances, few will be able to avoid owning the absurdity of recurring to an arbitrary sense, for the source of the idea of *fitness*, and of concluding that it signifies nothing true, nothing real in the objects, and that no one thing is or can be properly the *means* of another. In both cases the term *fit*, signifies a simple perception of the understanding; nor does this seem to be much clearer, or clogged with much greater difficulties, in the one case, than in the other.

Morally good and evil, reasonable and unreasonable, are epithets also commonly applied to actions, evidently meaning the same with *right and wrong, fit and unfit*.

Approving an action is the same with discerning it to be *right*; as *assenting* to a proposition is the same with discerning it to be *true*. 'Tis, however, to be remembered, that the word *approbation* conveys likewise, particularly, an idea of the *pleasure and satisfaction* generally

generally accompanying the discernment of right.

But *Obligation* is what is most necessary to be here insisted on; and to the explication of it, the best part of this chapter shall be devoted. — 'Tis strange this should have puzzled and perplexed so many writers. *Obligation* to action, and *rightness* of action, are plainly coincident or identical; so far so, that we cannot form a notion of the one, without taking in the other. This may appear to any one, upon considering, what difference he can point out between what is right, meet or fit to be done, and what *ought* to be done *. It is not indeed plainer, that figure implies something figured, solidity resistance, or an effect a cause, than it is that *rightness* implies *oughtness* (if I may be allowed this word) or *obligatoriness*. And as easily can we conceive of figure without extension, motion without a change of place, or any the greatest absurdity; as that it can be *fit* for us to do a thing, and yet that it may not be what we

* *Obligatory* answers to *oportet*, *decet*, *debitum*, in Latin; and to *δει*, *δεον εστι*, *δευμιτον*, *καθηκον*, *δικαιον*, in Greek. Who can suppose that the origin of the *το δεον* is different from that of the *καθηκον*, or of *justice* and *fitness*?

should do, what it is our *duty* to do, or what we are under an *obligation* to do. — *Right, fit, ought, should, duty, obligation* (very common words) convey, then, ideas necessarily implying or including one another. From hence it follows,

First, That virtue, *as such*, has a real, full, obligatory power antecedently to all positive laws or sanctions, and independently of all will and power; for obligation, we see, is involved in the very nature of it. To affirm, that the performance of that, which, to omit, would be wrong, is not obligatory, unless conducive to private good, or enjoined by a superior power, is a manifest contradiction. 'Tis to say, that it is not true, that a thing is what it is; what is just, just; or that we are *obliged* to do what we *ought* to do; unless it be the object of a command, or, in some manner, privately useful. — If there are any things fit to be done by an agent, besides such as tend to his own happiness, or independently of their influence on it; these things, by the terms, are likewise *obligatory*, independently of their influence on his happiness. — Whatever action attended with certain consequences, it is wrong to do, that action it is our *duty* not to do, whatever these consequences are, and whether

ther enjoined or not by any positive law *.—It appears, therefore, that those who maintain, that all obligation is to be deduced from positive laws, the divine will, or self-love, assert what (if they mean any thing contrary to what is here said) evidently implies, that the words *right* and *just* stand for no real and distinct characters of actions; but signify merely what is *willed* and *commanded*, or conducive to private advantage, whatever that be; so that any thing may be both right and wrong, morally good and evil, at the same time, and in any circumstances, as it may be commanded or forbidden by different laws and wills; and any the most pernicious and horrible effects will become just, and fit to be produced by any being, if but the *minute*st degree of clear advantage or pleasure may result to him from them.

Those who say, nothing can oblige but the will of God, generally resolve the power of this to oblige, to the annexed rewards and

* It is obvious, that this is very different from saying (what it would be plainly absurd to say) that every action, the performance of which, in certain circumstances, is wrong, will continue wrong, let the circumstances be ever so much altered, or by whatever authority it is commanded.

punishments. And thus, in reality, they subvert entirely the distinct and independent natures of moral good and evil; and are forced to maintain, that nothing can *oblige*, but the prospect of pleasure to be obtained, or pain to be avoided. If this is true, it follows that *vice* is, properly, no more than *imprudence*; that nothing is right or wrong, just or unjust, any further than it affects self-interest; and that a being, independently and completely happy, cannot have any moral perceptions, or any guide of his actions. The justness of these inferences cannot easily be denied by one, who will attend to the coincidence between obligation and virtue here insisted on, or who will consider, that as far as a being is not *obliged* to a thing, so far it is not *incumbent upon him*; or that what is the only source of *moral obligation*, must be also the only source of *moral duty*, or of *moral right and wrong*.

But to pursue this matter further; let it be considered, would a person, who either believes there is no God, or that he does not concern himself with human affairs, be under no *moral obligations*, and therefore not at all *accountable*? Would one, who should happen not to be convinced, that virtue tends to his happiness here or hereafter, be released from every

every *bond* of duty and morality? Or, would he, if he believed no future state, and that, in any instance, virtue was against his *present* interest, be truly *obliged*, in these instances, to be wicked? — These things must follow, if obligation depends entirely on the knowledge of the will of a superior, or on the connexion between actions and private interest. — But, indeed, the very expression, *virtue tends to our happiness*, and the supposition, that, in certain cases, it may be inconsistent with our happiness, imply it to be somewhat that may exist independently of any connexion with private happiness; and would have no sense, if it signified only the relation of actions to this. For then, to suppose virtue to be inconsistent with our happiness, would be the same with supposing, that what is *advantageous* to us, may be *disadvantageous* to us; and saying, that virtue tends to promote our happiness, would be saying, that actions, which are conducive to our happiness, tend to make us happy.

'Tis strange to find, those who plead for self-interest, as the only original and ground of moral obligation, asserting, that, when virtue stands in the way of our temporal interest, or clashes with present enjoyments, all motives to it cease, supposing no future state. For, upon their principles, the truth is not, that all
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motives to practise virtue, would, in these circumstances, cease, but that virtue itself would cease; nay, would be changed into vice; and what would otherwise have been fit and just, become unlawful and wrong: For, being under an obligation in these circumstances, not to do what appeared to us fit, it could not in reality be fit; we could not do it without violating our duty, and therefore, certainly, not without doing wrong. Thus, all who find not their present account in virtue, would, upon these principles, setting aside another world, be under an obligation to be wicked. Or, to speak more properly, the subject-matter of virtue and vice (that is, the relation of particular actions to private good) would be altered; what was before *wickedness* would become *virtue*, and what was before *virtue* would become *wickedness*. — It should be carefully minded, that, as far as another world creates *obligation*, it creates *virtue*; for, surely, it is an absurdity too gross to be maintained, that a man may act contrary to his obligations, and yet act virtuously.

Another observation worthy our notice in this place, is, that rewards and punishments suppose, in the very idea of them, moral obligation, and are founded upon it: They do not *make* it, but *enforce* it, or furnish additional motives

motives to comply with it. They are the *sanctions* of virtue, and therefore not its *efficients*. A reward supposes something done to *deserve* it, or a conformity to *obligations subsisting previously to it*; and punishment is always inflicted on account of some breach of *obligation*. Were we under no obligations, antecedently to the proposal of rewards and punishments, and independently of them, it would be very absurd to propose them, and a contradiction to suppose us subjects capable of them. — A person without any light, besides that of nature, and supposed ignorant of a future state of rewards and punishments, and the will of the Deity, might discover these by reasoning from his natural notions of right and wrong, morality and duty. But were the latter dependent on the former, and not *vice versa*; this could not be said, nor should we have any medium, or any principles left, from which to gather what the Deity required, or what the conditions are of his favour to us.

Secondly, From the account given of *obligation*, it follows that *rectitude* is a *law*, as well as a *rule* to us; that it not only *directs*, but *binds* all, as far as it is perceived. With respect to its being a *rule*, we may observe, that a rule of action signifying some measure
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or standard, to which we are to conform our actions, or some information we possess concerning what we ought to do, there can, in this sense, be no *other* rule of action; all besides, to which this name can be properly given, implying it, or signifying only helps to the discovery of it. To perceive or to be informed how it is *right*, how it is *just*, or *best* to act, is the very notion of a *direction to act*. And it is to be added, that it is such a direction as implies *authority*, and which we cannot disregard or neglect without remorse and pain. Reason is the guide, the natural and authoritative guide of a rational being. Where he has no discernment of right and wrong, there, and there only, is he (morally speaking) *free*. But where he has this discernment, where *moral good* appears to him, and he cannot avoid pronouncing concerning an action, that it is fit to be done, and evil to omit it; here he is tied in the most strict and absolute manner, in bonds that no power in nature can dissolve, and from which he can at no time, or in any single instance, break loose, without doing the most unnatural violence to himself; without making an inroad into his own soul, and immediately pronouncing his own sentence.

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That is properly a *law* to us, which we always and unavoidably feel and own ourselves obliged to obey; and which, as we obey or disobey it, is attended with the immediate sanctions of inward triumph and self-applause, or of inward shame and self-reproach, together with the secret apprehensions of the favour or displeasure of a superior righteous power, and the necessary anticipations of *future* rewards and punishments.— That has proper *authority* over us, whose precepts are unalterably binding, and to which to deny our submission is to transgress our duty, to incur guilt, and to render ourselves obnoxious to punishment and misery. All this is certainly true of our moral judgment, and contained in the idea of it.

Rectitude then or virtue is a *law**. And it is the *first* and *supreme* law, to which all other laws owe their force, on which they depend, and in virtue of which alone they oblige. It is an *universal law*. The whole creation is ruled by it: under it men and all rational beings subsist. It is the source and guide of all the actions of the Deity himself, and on it his throne and government are founded. It is an *unalterable and indispensable law*. The repeal, suspension, or even *relaxation* of it,

* Το μὲν οὐδέν, νόμος ἐστὶ βασιλικός. *Plat. Minos.*

once for a moment, in any part of the universe, cannot be conceived without a contradiction. Other laws have had a date; a time when they were enacted, and became of force. They are confined to particular places, rest on precarious foundations, may lose their vigour, grow obsolete with time, and become useless and neglected. None of these things are true of this law. It has no date; was never made or enacted; is prior to all things, and governs all things; is self-valid and self-originated; stands on immoveable foundations; and can never lose its vigour or usefulness, but must for ever retain them, without the possibility of diminution or abatement. It is coeval with eternity; as unalterable as necessary, everlasting truth; as independent as the existence of God; and as sacred, venerable, and awful as his nature and perfections.— The *authority* it is invested with, is native and essential to it, underived and absolute, superior to all other authority, and the basis and parent of all other authority. It is indeed self-evident, that, properly speaking, there is no other authority; nothing else that can claim our obedience, or that *ought* to guide and rule heaven and earth.— It is, in short, the one authority in nature, the same in all times and in all

all places ; or, in one word, the *divine* authority.

Thirdly, From the account given of obligation, it appears how absurd it is to enquire, what *obliges* us to practise virtue ? as if obligation was no part of the idea of virtue, but something adventitious and foreign to it ; that is, as if what was *due*, might not be our *duty*, or what was *wrong*, *unlawful* ; or as if it might not be true, that what it is *fit* to do, we *ought* to do, and that what we *ought* to do, we are *obliged* to do.--To ask, why we are *obliged* to practise virtue, to abstain from what is wicked, or perform what is just, is the very same as to ask, why we are *obliged* to do what we are *obliged* to do?—It is not possible to avoid wondering at those, who have so unaccountably perplexed and embarrassed themselves, on a subject that one would think was attended with so little difficulty ; and who, because they cannot find any thing in *virtue and duty themselves*, which can induce and oblige us to pay a regard to them in our practise, fly to self-love, and maintain, that from hence alone are derived all inducement and obligation.

Fourthly, From what has been observed, it may appear, in what sense obligation is ascribed to God. It is no more than ascribing to him

him the perception of rectitude, or saying, that there are certain ends, and certain measures in the administration of the world, which he approves, and which are *better* to be pursued than others.—Great care, however, should be taken, what language we here use. *Obligation* is a word to which many persons have affixed several ideas, which should by no means be retained when we speak of God. Our language and our conceptions, whenever he is the subject of them, are *always* extremely defective and inadequate, and *often* very erroneous.—There are many, who think it absurd and shocking to attribute any thing of *obligation* or *law*, to a being of whom nothing can be independent, and to whom nothing can be prior or superior. How, I conceive, we are to frame our apprehensions on this subject, has already, in some measure, appeared. It should, methinks, be enough to satisfy such persons, that the obligations ascribed to the Deity, arise entirely from and exist in his own nature; and that the eternal, unchangeable *law*, by which it has been said, he is directed in all his actions, is no other than *himself, his own infinite, eternal, all perfect understanding*.

Fifthly, What has been said also shews us, on what the obligations of religion and the
divine

divine will are founded. They are plainly branches of universal rectitude. Our obligation to obey the divine will, means nothing, but that obedience is *due* to it, or that it is *right and fit* to comply with it. What an absurdity is it then, to make obligation subsequent to the divine will, and the creature of it? For why, upon this supposition, does not all will oblige equally? If there be any thing which gives the preference to one will above another; that, by the terms, is *moral rectitude*. What would any laws or will of any being signify, what influence could they have on the determinations of a moral agent, was there no good reason for complying with them, no obligation to regard them, no *antecedent right* of command?— To affirm that we are *obliged* in any case, but not in virtue of *reason and right*, is to say, that in that case we are not obliged at all.— Besides, nothing could be ever commanded by God, was there no prior reason for commanding it. To which add, that one ground of our obligation to obey the divine will, is this, its being under the direction of reason, or always a wise, righteous, and good will. Thus, therefore, on all accounts, and in every view of things, do will and law presuppose reason and right. And it is, upon the

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whole, unquestionable, that if we take away the latter, the former lose all support and efficacy; and that were there nothing in itself, good and obligatory, nothing essentially just and unjust, fit and unfit, nothing could be made so, by law, will, commands, compacts, or any other means whatever. See observations to the same purpose, Chap. I. at the conclusion.

One cannot but observe on this occasion, how the ideas of right and wrong force themselves upon us, and in some form or other, always remain, even when we think we have annihilated them. Thus, after we have supposed all actions and ends to be in themselves indifferent, it is natural to conceive, that therefore it is right to give ourselves up to the guidance of unrestrained inclination, and *wrong* to be careful of our actions, or to give ourselves any trouble in pursuing any ends. Or, if with *Hobbs* and the orator in *Plato's Gorgias*, we suppose that the strongest may oppress the weakest, and take to themselves whatever they can seize; or, that unlimited power confers an unlimited right; this plainly still leaves us in possession of the idea of *right*, and only establishes *another species* of it.—In like manner, when we suppose all the obligations of morality to be derived from laws and compacts;

pacts; we, at the same time, find ourselves under a necessity of supposing something *before* them, not absolutely indifferent in respect of choice; something good and evil, right and wrong, which gave rise to them and occasion for them; and which, after they are made, makes them regarded.

But to return to the matter under consideration; the absolute and necessary perfections of the Deity; the infinite excellencies of his nature, as the fountain of reason and wisdom; the entire dependence of all beings upon him, and their deriving from his bounty existence and all its blessings and hopes; from hence, and not merely from his almighty power, arises his *sovereign authority*. 'Tis these render him the proper object of our eternal homage, constitute his right of government, vest him with universal and just dominion, and make it the first and supreme duty, of the whole reasonable world, to obey, to please, to regard, and honour him in all they think and do.—Those who will allow of no other motive to regard the Deity, no other meaning of the obligation to obey him, besides what is implied in his power to make us happy or miserable, maintain what it is wonderful how any human mind can seriously embrace. They maintain, that sup-

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posing we had nothing to hope or fear from him, we should not have the least desire of his approbation, or the least concern about his expectations from us, or any reason for paying him any kind of regard ; that, setting aside the consideration of our own interest, it is entirely indifferent what our dispositions and behaviour are with respect to him ; that his nature, attributes and benefits, however glorious and inconceivable, are in themselves, incapable of having any effect upon any rational nature ; and that though (retaining power) we were ever so much to change or reverse his character, yet he would still equally deserve our religious submission and homage, it would still, in the same sense and degree, be incumbent upon us to obey him, to resign our wills to his, and to endeavour to recommend and approve ourselves to him.

Further, what has been said will shew us, what judgment to form concerning several accounts and definitions, which have been given of obligation. It is easy here to perceive the perplexity arising, from attempting to define simple and uncompounded perceptions of the mind.— An ingenious and able writer † before taken notice of, defines obligation to be

† *Mr. Balguy. See his tracts on the foundation of moral goodness and the law of truth.*

a state

a state of the mind into which it is brought by perceiving a reason for action. Let this definition be substituted wherever the words *duty, should, obliged*, occur; and it will soon be seen, how improper and defective it is. The meaning of it is plainly, that obligation denotes that attraction or excitement, which the mind feels upon perceiving right and wrong. But this is the *effect* of obligation perceived, rather than *obligation itself*. Besides, it is proper to say, that the duty or obligation to act, is a reason for acting; and then this definition will stand thus: *Obligation is a state of the mind, into which it is brought by perceiving obligation to act.*— This author divides obligation into external and internal; by the former, meaning, the excitement we feel to pursue pleasure as *sensible agents*; and, by the latter, the excitement we feel to pursue virtue as *reasonable and moral agents*. But, as merely sensible beings, we are incapable of obligation; otherwise, it might be properly applied to brutes, which, I think, it never is. What, in these instances, produces confusion, is, the not distinguishing between perception and the effect of it; between *obligation* and a *motive*. All motives are not obligations; though the contrary be true, that wherever there is obligation, there is also a

motive to action. — Some perhaps, by *obligation*, may only mean such a motive to act, as shall have the greatest influence on men, or be most likely actually to determine and prevail with them; and as far as this is all that is intended, it may be allowed, that the obligation to practise virtue depends greatly, as mankind are now situated, on its connexion with private interest, and the views of future rewards and punishments.

Obligation has, by several writers, been styled, *the necessity of doing a thing in order to be happy* *. I have already taken sufficient notice

“ * The whole force of obligation (says Bishop Cumberland, in his *treatise* of the laws of nature, chap. v. sect. ii.) is this, that the legislator hath annexed to the observance of his laws, good, to the transgression evil; and those natural: In prospect whereof men are moved to perform actions, rather agreeing than disagreeing with the laws.” — Ibid. sect. 27. “ I think that moral obligation may be thus universally and properly defined. Obligation is that act of a legislator, by which he declares that actions conformable to his law are necessary to those for whom the law is made. An action is then understood to be necessary to a rational agent, when it is certainly one of the causes necessarily required to that happiness, which he naturally and consequently necessarily desires.” — Again, sect. 35. “ I cannot conceive any thing which could bind the mind of man with any necessity (in which *Justinian's* definition places the force of obligation) except arguments proving, that good or evil will proceed from our actions.” — The remarks which Mr. *Maxwell*, the translator, makes on these passages, are so good, that I cannot
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of the opinion from which this definition is derived; and therefore shall here only ask,

help transcribing some of them. — “ If, says he, this (that is, the necessity of the observance of the law as a means of our happiness) “ be the whole of the law’s obligation, the transgression of the law is not *unrighteousness*, “ *sin* and *crime*, but only *imprudence* and *infelicity*, for the “ sanction of the law importeth no other evil. But the “ obligation or bond of the law is the *jural restraint* “ which is expressed by, *non licet, you may not do it*; but “ because a bare *non licet* or prohibition is not sufficient to “ enforce the law, therefore the *sin* and *punishment*, the “ *precept* and the *sanction* both concur, to make the *jural* “ *restraint*, which must be thus fully expressed, *non licet* “ *impune, you may not do it with impunity*. But though “ *sin* and *punishment* are closely connected, yet the obligation of *non licet, it may not be done*, is distinct from the “ obligation of *non impune, not with impunity*, as *sin* and “ *punishment* are of distinct consideration. But a man is “ *bound*, both when he cannot do a thing *without sin*, and “ when he cannot do a thing *without punishment*; and *both* “ these *obligations* are in every law, and both concur to “ make the obligation of it. But because the obligation of “ *non licet*, is antecedent to the obligation of *non impune*, “ the precept to the sanction, and the *sin* is made by the “ law, the law hath so much obligation, as to make the “ *sin* before the penalty is enacted; therefore, the law hath “ an obligation antecedently to the sanction of it. For “ every one is *bound* to avoid what is *sin*, because none “ can have a right to do what is *unrighteous*. — No inge- “ nuous man looks upon himself as obliged to be grateful “ to his benefactors, to love his wife and children, or to “ love and honour his God and Saviour, merely by the “ sanction of rewards and punishments. Is there no obli- “ gation on men from right and wrong, due and undue, “ sanctity and *sin*, righteousness and wickedness, honesty “ and dishonesty, conscience or crime, virtue or villainy,

what, if this be the only sense of obligation, is meant when we say, a man is *obliged*, or that he ought to study his own happiness? Is it not obvious that *obliged*, in this proposition, signifies, not the necessity of doing a thing in order to be happy, which would make it ridiculous; but only, that it is *right* to study our own happiness, and *wrong* to neglect it?

A very learned author † maintains, that moral obligation always denotes some object

“ but merely from a prudent regard to their own happiness?
 “ —The vulgar say, *I am bound in duty, in justice, in gratitude*; and the schools say, *that the obligation of the law of nature is a bond of conscience*. — It is not possible to deduce a conscientious obligation, merely from a *politick*
 “ *and prudential regard to our own happiness*. — The legislator annexes to his law the sanction of the *good of*
 “ *pleasure*, for the sake of the *good of virtue*, which the law enjoyneth; this therefore, is the principal in the estimation of the lawgiver; whose will, if it be made known,
 “ is, without a sanction, a bond or obligation upon us;
 “ for we *owe* obedience thereto, and every one is bound to
 “ pay what he oweth.” See the *Appendix to Cumberland's treatise of the laws of nature*, page 55. — A virtuous practice (says the same writer, page 83.) is,
 “ in the nature and reason of the thing, indispensably requisite in all intelligent agents, and is to them *matter*
 “ *of law and obligation*. For *law or obligation* (in a large, but very proper sense) is nothing else, but a *non licet*, or
 “ a boundary to licence.”

† See *Dr. Warburton's divine legation*, Vol. I. page 50.

of will and law, or implies some *obliger*. Were this true; it would be mere jargon ever to mention our being *obliged* to obey the divine will; and yet, this is as proper language as any we can use. But his meaning seems to be, that the word *obligation* signifies only the *particular fitness* of obeying the divine will, and cannot properly be applied to any other fitness; which is, surely, restraining the sense of the word, in a manner which the common use of it by no means warrants.

The sense of obligation given by Dr. *Hutcheson* *, agrees, in some measure, with the account here given of it. Then, he says, a *person is obliged to an action, when every spectator, or he himself, upon reflexion, must approve his action, and disapprove omitting it*. This account, however, is not perfectly accurate; for though obligation to act, and reflex approbation and disapprobation do, in one † sense, al-

* *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, Sect. 1.

† The reason of adding this restriction is this. A man may, through involuntary error, approve of doing what he ought not to do, or think that to be his duty, which is really contrary to it; and yet it is too, in this case, really his duty to act agreeably to his judgment. — There are then two views of obligation, which, if not attended to, will be apt to produce confusion. — In one sense, a man's being *obliged* to act in a particular manner, depends on his knowing it; and

ways accompany and imply one another ; yet they seem as different as an *act* and an *object* of the mind, or as perception and the truth perceived. It is not exactly the same to say, it is *right*, or our *duty* to do a thing ; and to say, we *approve* of doing it. The one is the quality of the action, the other the *discernment* of this quality. Yet, such is the connexion between these, that it is not very necessary to distinguish them ; and, in common language, the term *obligation* often stands, for the sense and judgment of the mind concerning what is right and wrong, meet or unmeet, to be done. It would, nevertheless, I imagine, prevent some confusion, and keep our ideas more distinct and clear, to remember, that a man's consciousness that an action ought to be done, the *judgment concerning obligation*, and inducing or inferring it, cannot, properly speaking, be *obligation itself* ; and that, however variously and loosely this word may be used, its prima-

in another sense, it does not. Was not the *former* true, we might be contracting guilt, when acting with the fullest and sincerest consent and approbation of our consciences : And was not the *latter* true, it would not be sense, ever to speak of *showing* another what his *obligations* are, or how it is *incumbent upon him* to act. — This entirely coincides with the distinction of virtue into *absolute* and *relative*, hereafter to be explained, *Chap. VIII.*

ry and original signification coincides with *rectitude*. ‡

‡ I observe that Mr. *Adams*, in an excellent Sermon on the *Nature and Obligation of Virtue*, published since I had writ the above, and almost finished this work, agrees with me in the account he gives of obligation. — To the question, in what does the obligation to virtue and right action consist? he answers, “ that *right* implies *duty* in its idea; that “ to perceive an action to be right, is to see a reason for “ doing it in the action itself, abstracted from all other “ considerations whatsoever; and that this perception, this “ acknowledged rectitude in the action, is the very essence “ of obligation, that which commands the approbation “ and choice, and binds the conscience of every rational “ being,” *page 11*. — “ Nothing (he says, *p. 14*.) can “ bring us under an obligation to do what appears to our “ moral judgment wrong. It may be supposed our interest to do this; but it cannot be supposed our duty: For, “ I ask, if some power, which we are unable to resist, “ should assume the command over us, and give us laws “ which are unrighteous and unjust; should we be under “ an obligation to obey him? Should we not rather be “ obliged to shake off the yoke, and to resist such usurpation, if it were in our power? However then we “ might be swayed by hope or fear; it is plain, that we “ are under an obligation to right, which is antecedent, “ and, in order and nature, superior to all other. Power “ may compel, interest may bribe, pleasure may persuade; “ but reason only can oblige. This is the only authority “ which rational beings can own, and to which they owe “ obedience.” — The coincidence which, in other instances, I have found between the sentiments of this most judicious writer, on the subject of virtue, and those delivered in this treatise, has very agreeably surprized me, and given me a degree of confidence in some things I have asserted, which I should otherwise have wanted.

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I shall leave the reader to judge how far these remarks are applicable to what Dr. *Clark* says on this head, who gives much the same account of obligation with that last mentioned; and some of whose words it may not be amiss to quote. See his *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, page 43, 6th Edit. “The judgment and conscience of a man’s own mind, concerning the reasonableness and fitness of the thing, that his actions should be conformed to such or such a rule or law, is the truest and formallest obligation, even more properly and strictly so, than any opinion whatsoever, of the authority of the giver of a law, or any regard he may have to its sanctions by rewards and punishments; for whoever acts contrary to this sense and conscience of his own mind, is necessarily self-condemned; and the greatest and strongest of all obligations, is that which a man cannot break through without condemning himself. — The original obligation of all, is the eternal reason of things; that reason which God himself, who has no superior to direct him, and to whose happiness nothing can be added, nor any thing diminished from it, yet constantly obliges himself to govern the world by.

So

“ —So far, therefore, as men are conscious of
“ what is right and wrong, so far they are
“ under an obligation to act accordingly; and,
“ consequently, that eternal rule of right,
“ which I have been hitherto describing, it is
“ evident, ought as indispensably to govern
“ men’s actions, as it cannot but necessarily
“ determine their assent.” Page 51, he says,
“ The minds of men cannot but acknowledge
“ the reasonableness and fitness of their go-
“ verning all their actions by the rule of right
“ or equity: And this assent is a formal obli-
“ gation upon every man actually and con-
“ stantly to conform himself to that rule.”

Dr. *Butler*, likewise, in his *Sermons on Human Nature*, and the explanatory remarks upon them, in the *Preface*, insists strongly on the obligation implied in reflex approbation; the supremacy belonging to the principle of reflexion within us, and the authority and right of superintendency, which are constituent parts of the idea of it. From this incomparable writer, I beg leave to borrow one observation more on this subject, of considerable importance.

Every being endowed with reason, and conscious of right and wrong, is, as such, necessarily a *law* to himself*: It follows, there-

* I have not here copied Dr. *Butler*, but given the sense
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fore, that the greatest degree of ignorance or scepticism possible, with respect to the tendencies of virtue, the authority of the Deity, a future state, and the rewards and punishments to be expected in it, leaves us still truly and fully accountable, guilty, and punishable, if we transgress this law ; and will, by no means, exempt us from justice, or be of any avail to excuse or save us, should it prove true, that such authority and future state really exist. For what makes an agent ill-deserving, is not any opinion he may have about a superior power, or positive sanctions, but his doing wrong, and acting contrary to the conviction of his mind. “ What renders obnoxious to
 “ punishment, is not the fore-knowledge of
 “ it, but merely violating a known obliga-
 “ tion.”

There is an objection to what has been now said of obligation, which deserves to be considered *. — It may be asked, “ Are there
 “ not many actions, of which it cannot be
 “ said, that we are *bound* to perform them,

of his observation in other words. See the *Preface* to his Sermons, p. 20.

† See *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, Part I. Essay ii. Chap. 3.

“ that yet are *right* to be performed ; and the
“ actual performance of which appears to us
“ even more amiable, than if they had been
“ strictly our duty ; such as requital of good
“ for evil, and acts of generosity and kind-
“ nefs ? ”

I answer, that allowing this, the most that can follow from it is, not that rectitude does not imply obligation, but that it does not imply it absolutely and universally, or so far as that there is no sense, in which actions can be denominated *right*, that does not carry in it *obligation*. The nature of rectitude may vary, according to the objects or actions to which it is ascribed. All right actions are not so in precisely the same sense ; and it might, with little prejudice to what is above asserted, be granted, that some things are right, in such a sense as yet not to be our indispensable duty. But then let the following things be remembered.

First, That it holds universally and incontestably, that whatsoever is right in such a sense, as that the omission of it would be wrong, is always, and indispensably obligatory. And, in the next place, that though the idea of *rightness* may be more general than that of *fitness*, *duty*, or *obligation* ; so that there may
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be instances, to which we apply the one, but not the other ; yet this cannot be said of *wrong*. The idea of this, and of obligation, are certainly of the same extent ; I mean, that though there may be cases, in which it cannot be said, that what we approve as right, *ought* to have been done ; yet there are no cases in which it cannot be said, that what is wrong to be done, or omitted, *ought not* to be done or omitted. These things appear to me self-evident, and they are sufficient for my purpose.

But, upon a careful enquiry, it will be found, that this objection does not require any such restrictions of what has been advanced, as some may think necessary ; and the following observations will, perhaps, shew this.

In the *first* place, Beneficence, in general, is undoubtedly a duty ; and it is only with respect to the particular acts and instances of it, that we are at liberty. A certain person, suppose, performs an act of kindness to another : We say, he *might* not have done it, or he was not *obliged* to do it ; that is, he was not obliged to do this *particular* kind act. But to be kind in some instances or other ; to do all the good he properly can to his fellow-creatures, every one is obliged ; and we necessarily look upon him, as blame-worthy and guilty, who
aims

aims not at all at this ; but contents himself with barely abstaining from injury and mischief. A certain part of our fortunes and labour we *owe* to those about us, and *should* employ in doing good ; but the particular objects and methods of beneficence are not absolutely fixed. Here we are left to our own choice, and may not be in any sense bound ; that is, there may be nothing in any particular objects or methods of beneficence, which render it fit and right *they* should be chosen rather than others. If a man endeavours to do all the good which is suitable to his station and abilities, we never condemn him for not doing it in a particular way, or for rejecting particular objects that are offered to him ; except this way and these objects are such, that it is right he should *prefer* them. As far as this happens, so far, even here, *duty* takes place. Thus, *cæteris paribus*, it is right, friends, relations, and benefactors should be preferred to strangers ; and, whoever does otherwise, acts contrary to his *duty*.

Again ; the precise limits of some general duties cannot be determined by us. No one can tell *exactly* to what degree he ought to be beneficent, and how far he is obliged to exert himself for the benefit of other men. Thus, in particular, no person can determine

accurately, how far, in many cases, his own good ought to give way to that of another, what determinate number of distressed persons he ought to relieve, or what portion *precisely* of his fortune he ought to lay out in charity, or of his time and labour in direct endeavours to serve the publick.

In order to form a judgment in these cases, there are so many things to be considered in our own circumstances and abilities, and in the state of men and the world, that we cannot but be in some uncertainty. There are indeed degrees of *defectiveness and excess*, which we easily and certainly see to be wrong: But there is a great variety of intermediate degrees, concerning which we cannot absolutely pronounce, that one of them rather than another ought to be chosen. — The same thing is true of the general duty of worshipping God. Many of the particular circumstances attending it, and the precise degree of frequency with which it should be performed, are not distinctly determined and marked out to us. In this as well as the preceding instance, our consciences, within certain limits, are free *, and for a very

* The latitude here taken notice of is one thing that allows so much room and scope for unfairness and disingenuity; and that renders it generally certain, that

good reason ; namely, because we have no distinct apprehensions of *rectitude* to guide us. To the same degree and extent, that we see this, we are *bound*, in these as much as in any other cases. Whenever any degree of beneficence, or any particular circumstances and frequency of divine worship, or any behaviour in any possible instances, appear, *all things considered, best* ; they become *obligatory*. It is impossible to put a case, in which we shall not be *obliged* to conform ourselves to the *right* of it, whatever that is. Even what, at any time, or in any circumstances, is, upon the whole, only more *proper* to be done, *ought* then to be done ; and to suppose the contrary, would be to take away the whole sense and meaning of such an assertion.

In short, the following general reasoning will hold universally. Let any particular being be supposed to have under his consideration, any action proposed to be performed by him. The performance of it, must be either right, or wrong, or indifferent. Now, it is self-evident, that, if it is not the last, it must be one of the other two, and that obligation will ensue :

a backward unwilling heart, that is not strongly attached to virtue, and possessed with an inward relish for it, and thorough love of God and men, will err on the deficient side.

For what can be plainer, than that it is a contradiction to say, we may act as we will, when it is not *indifferent* how we act?— If it is *wrong*, obligation to forbear is implied.— If *right*, this may be true only of such *kind* of actions, as relieving the miserable, or worshipping the Deity in general ; and then, it is only these *general duties* that are obligatory, which may be consistent with complete liberty and perfect indifference, in regard to the *particular action* in view.— Or, it may be true of this *particular* action, and then it is no longer indifferent ; yet still, there may be liberty and indifference as to the time and manner of doing it. But if even the time and manner are not indifferent, or, if it is right the agent should do *this particular action* at *this* time, and in *one particular* manner ; then is he also as to these *obliged*.

“ What now shall we say, to the greater

“ *amiableness* of the actions we are examining?

“ How can there be greater virtue, or any

“ virtue at all, in doing particular things which

“ beforehand were indifferent, and which

“ without any blame we might have omitted?”

The answer is very easy. What denominates an agent virtuous, and entitles him to praise, is his acting from a regard to goodness and right. Now, the performance of particular instances

of

of duty, or the production of particular effects which have nothing in them that requires our preference, may, as much as any actions whatsoever, proceed from this regard. Relieving a miserable object is virtue, though there may be no reason that obliges a person to select this object in particular out of many others. Worshipping God may arise from a general sense of duty, though it is known that the particular times and manner in which it is done, have nothing morally better in them.— And as to the *greater* merit we apprehend in many actions of this kind; as, in many instances of generosity, kindness, charity, and forgiveness of injuries; it is plainly to be accounted for, in the following manner. — As every action of an agent is *in him* so far virtuous, as he was determined to it by a regard to virtue; so the more of this regard it discovers, the more we must admire it. And it is plain, it is more discovered, and a stronger virtuous principle proved, by fixing (in cases where the limits of duty are not exactly defined) upon the greater rather than the less. A person acts more apparently from good motives, and shews a greater degree of benevolence, and is therefore deservedly more applauded, who chuses to devote more of his fortune, his time and his

labour, to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, or to serve his neighbours or his country, when he knows not but that if he had devoted less, he would have come off with innocence, fulfilled the whole part in reason incumbent upon him, and deserved just commendation. And even where there is overdoing, and a person is led to visible extremes, and an undue neglect of his private concerns, we always approve, except we suspect the influence of some wrong or indirect motives and causes, such as affectation, inattention, weakness, or superstition. Some of these things will be again more particularly insisted on, when we come to consider the difference which they imply and require us to keep in view, between the virtue of the *action*, and the virtue of the *agent*.

I shall only say further on this subject, that it appears to be so far from being true, that the performance of mere duty produces no love or friendship to the agent, (which is what has been asserted) that, on the contrary, he who, however tempted and opposed, discharges his whole duty, and endeavours faithfully and uniformly, to *be* and *do* in all respects just what he ought to *be* and *do*, is the object of our highest love and friendship: To aim at acting *beyond* obligation, being the same with aiming at acting

contrary

contrary to obligation ; and doing *more* than is reasonable and fit to be done, the same with *doing wrong*.

Having now given, what appears to me, the true and full account of the nature and foundation of moral good and evil, and of moral obligation, I shall beg leave to conclude this chapter with an examination of some of the forms of expression, which several eminent writers have used on this subject.

The meaning, original and design of these expressions will appear, after considering, that all actions being necessarily right, indifferent, or wrong ; what determines which of these an action should be accounted, is the *truth of the case* ; or the relations and circumstances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations, there is a certain conduct right ; there are certain manners of behaviour, which we unavoidably approve as soon as these relations are known. Change the relations and a different manner of behaviour becomes right. Nothing is clearer than that what is due or undue, proper or improper to be done, must vary according to the different natures of things and the various states and circumstances of beings. If a particular treatment of *one* nature is right ; it is impossible, that the same treatment of a *different* nature, or of *all* natures, should be right.— In a sense

somewhat similar to this, many of the particular properties of lines and figures are determined by their position, and the manner of their description: Nor would it be a greater absurdity to assert of lines and figures, that however drawn, or however situated, they will retain the same properties, or the same proportions to one another; than to assert of actions (which are nothing abstracted from their objects and ends) that they would retain the same moral qualities, whatever their objects and ends are, or however cases and circumstances may alter.

Now, from hence, arose the expressions, *acting suitably to the natures of things; treating things as they are; conformity to truth; agreement and disagreement, congruity and incongruity between actions and relations.* These expressions are of no use, and have little meaning, if considered as intended to *define* virtue; for they evidently *presuppose* it. Treating a thing as being what *it is*, is treating it as *'tis right such* a thing should be treated. Conforming ourselves to truth, means the same with conforming ourselves to the true state and relations we are in; which is the same with doing what such a state and relations *require*, or what is *right* in them. In given circumstances, there is something peculiar and determinate

best

best to be done ; which, when these circumstances cease, ceases with them, and other obligations of conduct arise. This naturally leads us to speak of *suiting* actions to circumstances, natures, and characters ; and of the *agreement* and *repugnancy* between them. Nor, when thus considered, is there any thing in such ways of speaking, not proper and intelligible. But, at the same time, it is very obvious, that they are only different phrases for *right* and *wrong* ; and 'tis a pity that those, who have made so much use of them, did not more attend to this, and avoid the ambiguity and confusion arising, from seeming to deny an *immediate perception* of morality, without any deductions of reasoning, and from attempting to give definitions of words, which admit not of them, and where they can answer no end, except to perplex and mis-lead. Were any one to define *pleasure*, to be the *agreement* between a faculty and its object ; what light or instruction would such a definition convey, or what end would it answer ? Would it be amiss to ask, what this *agreement* is ; and whether any thing be meant by it, different from the *pleasure itself*, which the object is fitted to produce by its influence on the organ or faculty ?

'Tis

'Tis well known that Mr. *Wollaston*, in a work which has obtained great and just reputation, places the whole notion of moral good and evil in signifying and denying truth. Supposing his meaning to be, that all virtue and vice may be reduced to these *particular instances* of them; nothing can be more plain, than that it leaves the nature and original of our ideas of them, as much as ever undetermined: For it acquaints us not, whence our ideas of right in observing truth, and wrong in violating it, arise; but supposes these to be self-evident principles or truths, as indeed they are; but not more so, than all the other principles of morality. — The evil of ingratitude and cruelty is not the same, with that of denying truth, or affirming a lie: Nor can the *formal ratio and notion* of it, be justly said to consist in this; because there may be no intention to deny any thing true, or to produce in observers an assent to any thing false. Ingratitude and cruelty would be in the same manner wrong, though there were no rational creatures in the world besides the agent, and though he had and could have no design to declare a falsehood; which is a quite distinct species of evil. — A person, who neglects the homage and worship due to God, may have no thought of denying
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his existence, or of conveying any such opinion to others. It is true, he acts as if he did not exist, that is, in a manner which nothing else can justify, or which, upon any other supposition, is wrong and inexcusable; and therefore, *figuratively speaking*, may be said to *contradict* truth, and to declare himself to be self-originated, independent, and self-sufficient*. 'Tis probable, this eminent writer meant in reality, but little more than this; and the language he has introduced, I would not, by any means, be thought absolutely to condemn. All I aim at, is to guard against misunderstanding it, and making a wrong application of it.

With the same view I must add, that when virtue is said to consist in *conformity to the relations* † of persons and things; this must not be

* How plain is it here, that the very thing that gives ground for the application of this language in this instance, is our perceiving, antecedently to this application, that such a manner of acting, in such circumstances, is *wrong*? The same is true in all other instances: Nor, independently of this perception, could we ever know when to say, that an action affirms or denies truth. How then does such language explain and define right and wrong, or virtue and vice?

† Dr. Clark, and other writers, sometimes use the phrase, ETERNAL RELATIONS OF THINGS. Those who think this a strange phrase, will, I suppose, think it still stranger to be told, that it means what remains of relations and things, after the ceasing of their *actual* existence; that is, their
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considered as a *definition of virtue*, or as intended to assign a *reason justifying the practice of it*. Nothing can be gained by such forms of expression, when used with these intentions: And, if we will consider, why it is right to conform ourselves to the relations in which persons and things stand to us; we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a *simple, immediate perception*, or in something *ultimately approved*, and for which no justifying reason can be assigned. — Explaining virtue, by saying, that it is the *conformity of our actions to reason*, is yet less proper; for this conformity signifying only, that our actions are such as reason dictates, approves, or discerns to be right; it will be no more than saying, that virtue is doing right. *

possible existence, their ideas, their abstract and intelligible essences; which, with whatever is true or knowable of them, are necessary, eternal, and always the same.

* To the same purpose Mr. *Adams* has observed, “ That when virtue is said to consist in a conformity to truth; in acting agreeably to the truth of the case; to the reason, truth, or fitness of things; there is, if not impropriety, something of obscurity, or inaccuracy in the expression; and that the only meaning of such expressions will, in all cases, be found to be this; acting according to what reason, in the present circumstances of the agent, and the relations he stands in to the objects before him, pronounces to be right.” See his Sermon before quoted, p. 55, 58. — “ Truth (as he elsewhere

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It should be further considered, that neither do these forms of expression direct us to proper *criteria*, by which we may be enabled to judge in all cases, what is morally good or evil. For if, after weighing the state and circumstances of a case, we do not perceive how it is proper to act; it would be trifling to direct us, for this end, to consider what is *agreeable* to them. When, in given circumstances, we cannot determine what is *right*, we must be also equally unable to determine what is *suitable* to those circumstances and to the truth of things. 'Tis indeed very proper and just,

says) "is a term of wider extent than right. The character of wisdom or prudence, of skill in any art or profession, are, as well as virtue, founded in a regard to truth, and imply the acting agreeably to the nature and reason of things; yet are these ideas certainly distinct from that of goodness, or moral rectitude. The man, who builds according to the principles of geometry, acts as agreeably to truth; and he who should transgress the rules of architecture, as much violates truth, as he who acts agreeably to the duty of gratitude, or contrary to it. But, in the former of these instances, the conformity to truth is not virtue but skill; the deflection from it is not vice, but ignorance or folly," p. 29. — To these observations may be added, that to act *agreeably* to the character of a vicious man, or to the relation of an enemy, an oppressor, or tyrant, is, in no improper sense, to act viciously; to injure, to hurt, and destroy. So general, vague, and loose is this way of speaking, and so liable to objections, when used to define and explain virtue.

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to direct us, in order to judge of an action, to endeavour to discover the whole truth with respect to its probable or possible consequences, the circumstances and qualifications of the object, and the relations of the agent; for these are the things, as was before said, which determine and ascertain its moral nature; and no more can be intended, by representing truth and relations as *criteria* of virtue.

“ The language we are considering then, expressing neither *definitions* nor *proper criteria* of virtue, of what use is it? and “ what is designed by it?” I answer, that it is evidently designed to shew, that morality is *founded* on truth and reason, or that it is equally necessary and immutable, and perceived by the same power, with the natural proportions and essential differences of things.

“ But what, it may be again asked, is it more “ than bare assertion? What proof of this does “ it convey?” In reply to this, one might observe, that objections of the same nature might be made to what has been said by those who have maintained the contrary. There is not, I think, on the other side any more than mere assertion; and it is highly necessary that this subject should be better examined, and somewhat more said upon it than has been said, before

fore we consider it as a settled and decided point, that our ideas of morality are derived from an arbitrary sense, and not ideas of the understanding.

The agreement of *proportion* between certain quantities, is real and necessary, and perceived by the understanding. Why should we doubt, whether the agreement of *fitness* also between certain actions and relations, is real and necessary, and perceived by the same faculty? From the different natures, properties, and positions of different objects, result necessarily different *relative* fitnesses and unfitnesses; different productive *powers*; different *aptitudes* to different ends, and agreements or disagreements of them amongst themselves. What is there absurd or exceptionable in saying, likewise, that from the various relations of beings and objects, there result different *moral* fitnesses and unfitnesses of action; different *obligations* of conduct; which are equally real and unalterable with the former, and equally independent of our ideas and opinions? For any particular natural objects to exist at all, and for them to exist with such and such mutual proportions, is the same. And, in like manner, for reasonable beings, of particular natures and capacities, to exist at all in such and such circumstances and relations, and for
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such and such things to be fit or proper for them to do, is the same. And as the author of nature, in creating the former, willed the proportions and truths implied in them to exist; so also, by the very act of creating the latter, and placing them in their respective relations to one another, and to himself, he willed that such and such things should be done, and such and such conduct and duties observed. —When we compare innocence and eternal, absolute misery, the idea of *unsuitableness* between them arises in our minds. And from comparing together many natural objects and beings, an idea of *unsuitableness*, likewise, but of a totally different kind, arises within us; that is, we perceive such a *repugnancy* between them, that the one cannot be made to correspond to the other; or, that their different properties cannot co-exist in the same subject; or, that they are not capable of jointly subserving one end, or of producing such and such particular effects on one another. Why should one of these be taken to be less real than the other? No one can avoid owning that he has the idea of *unsuitableness*, or a sentiment of *wrong*, in the application of absolute and eternal misery to innocence. Let him, if he can, find out one reason for denying

ing it to be a sentiment of his understanding; or the perception of truth. What character, what mark of this does it want?

To this purpose have the advocates for fitness, as the foundation of morality, argued; and this has been the drift and intention of their assertions and reasonings. It must, however, I think, be allowed, that though many of them have writ excellently on this subject; they have yet, by too lax a use of words, by neglecting the necessary precision, and often only, in different language, *affirming*, when they designed to *prove*, given occasion for the objections of those, who have embraced and defended a different scheme.

It would not be difficult to shew, how the like dispute might be raised about the original of our ideas of *power* and *connexion*, the like objections started, and the same embarrassment produced.

But it will better help to illustrate some of these remarks, and give a clearer view of the state of this controversy, if, instead of *moral good and evil*, we substitute *equality* and *inequality*, and suppose the enquiry to be concerning the original and foundation of these. He that should derive our ideas of them from a *sense*, would be undoubtedly mistaken, if he

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meant any thing more, than that they were *immediately* perceived. And another, who, in opposition to this, should assert them to be *founded on the natures and unalterable mutual respects and proportions of things*; and to denote *conformity to reason*, or the *agreement and disagreement, correspondency and repugnancy* between different objects or quantities; would as plainly assert the truth; though, possibly, in language liable to be misunderstood, and really trifling, when considered as designed to set aside an *immediate power*, or, independently of it, to define and explain *equality* and *inequality*: Nor, in this view of such language, would any thing be more natural, than to observe, how much more proper and determinate it is to say, that the *agreement* between two quantities is their *equality*, than that their *equality* is the *agreement* between them. But how unreasonable would it be to conclude, as in the parallel case has been done, that therefore *equality* and *inequality* are perceived by an *implanted sense*, and not at all objects of knowledge, or of the understanding?

C H A P. VII.

Of the Subject-matter of Virtue, or its principal Heads and Divisions.

THERE remain yet three things to be considered in relation to virtue.

First, To what particular course of action we give this name, or what are the chief heads of it.

Secondly, What is the true principle or motive, from which a virtuous agent, as such, acts.

Thirdly, What is meant by the different degrees of virtue, in different actions and characters, and how we estimate them. — Each of these shall be examined in the order in which they are here proposed.

There would be less occasion for the first of these enquiries, if several writers had not maintained, that the *whole* of virtue consists in benevolence, or the study of publick good. Nothing better can be offered on this point, than what is said under the fifth observation, in the *Dissertation on the nature of Virtue*, an-

nexed to Dr. *Butler's Analogy*. — From hence, therefore, I shall borrow the following passage: — “ Benevolence, and the
 “ want of it, singly considered, are in no sort
 “ the whole of virtue and vice; for, if this
 “ were the case, in the review of one's own
 “ character, or that of others, our moral understanding, and moral sense, would be indifferent to every thing, but the degrees in
 “ which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting: That is, we
 “ should neither approve of benevolence to
 “ some persons rather than to others, nor disapprove injustice and falshood upon any other account, than merely as an over-balance
 “ of happiness was foreseen likely to be produced by the first, and of misery by the
 “ last. But now, on the contrary, suppose
 “ two men competitors for any thing whatever,
 “ which would be of equal advantage to either of them. Though nothing indeed
 “ would be more impertinent, than for a stranger to busy himself to get one of them preferred to the other; yet such endeavour
 “ would be virtue in behalf of a friend, or benefactor, abstracted from all consideration
 “ of distant consequences; as, that examples of
 “ gratitude, and the cultivation of friendship,
 “ would

“ would be of general good to the world. —
“ Again, suppose one man should, by fraud
“ or violence, take from another the fruit of
“ his labour, with intent to give it to a third,
“ who, he thought, would have as much pleasure
“ from it, as would balance the pleasure
“ which the first possessor would have had in
“ the enjoyment, and his vexation in the loss
“ of it; suppose again, that no bad consequences
“ would follow, yet such an action would
“ surely be vicious. ”

The cases here put, are clear and decisive, nor is it easy to conceive what can be said in reply to them. Many other cases, facts, and observations, to the same purpose, might be mentioned. It cannot surely be true, for instance, that promises and engagements are not in any case binding upon any one, any further than he thinks the observance of them will be productive of good to particular persons, or to society; or, that we are released from all obligation to regard them, as soon as we believe, that violating them will not hurt the person to whom they have been made, or that, if detrimental to him, will be equally beneficial to ourselves, or, in any other way, will be attended with advantages equivalent to the foreseen harm. He would be looked upon by all,

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as having acted basely, who, having any thing to bestow or dispose of, which he had engaged to give to one person, should give it another; nor would it be regarded as any vindication of his conduct to alledge, that he knew this other would reap equal profit from it. Many particular actions, or omissions of action, become, in consequence of promises and engagements, highly evil, which otherwise would have been entirely innocent; and the degree of vice, in any harm done, is always greatly increased, when it is done by means of deceit and treachery. — To treat a party of rebels, or publick robbers, after they had surrendered themselves upon certain terms and articles stipulated with them, in the same manner as if they had been reduced by force, would be generally disapproved: And yet it would be hard to shew, that the consequences would be very detrimental to the publick, were no faith ever kept with persons in these circumstances. — A general would be universally condemned, who, by means of any treacherous contrivance, should engage his enemies to trust themselves in his power; and then destroy them. How different are our ideas of this, from those we have of the same thing effected by open and fair conquest?

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Would it be indifferent whether a person, supposed to be just returned from some unknown country or new world, gave a true or a false account of what he had seen? Is there a man in the world who, in such a case, would not think it better to tell truth than needlessly and wantonly to deceive? Is it possible any one can think, he may innocently, to save himself or another from some small inconvenience, which he can full as well prevent by other means, tell any lyes or make any false protestations, if he knows they will never be found out? If he may thus impose upon his fellow-creatures by declaring one falsehood, why may he not in like circumstances declare any number of falsehoods, and with any possible circumstances of solemnity? Why, is he not at liberty, to make any declarations, however deceitful, however blasphemous, to practise any kinds of dissimulation and commit any perjuries, whenever he believes they are likely to hurt no one, and will be the means of introducing him to any degree of greater ease or usefulness in life?— Can we, when we consider these things, avoid pronouncing, that there is *intrinsic rectitude* in keeping faith and sincerity,

sincerity, and *intrinsick evil* in the contrary *; and that it is by no means true, that veracity and falshood appear *in themselves*, and *exclusive of their consequences*, wholly indifferent to our moral judgment? Is it a notion capable of being seriously embraced and defended, or even born by an ingenuous mind, that the goodness of the end always consecrates the means; or that, *cæteris paribus*, it is as innocent and laudable to accomplish our purposes by lyes, prevarication and perjury, as by faithful and open dealing and honest labour? wherein, upon such sentiments, would consist the wickedness of pious frauds, and why are they so much condemned and detested?

No worse mistake, indeed, can be well conceived than this, which I am now considering: for, as the excellent author before cited observes, “it is certain, that some of the most shocking instances of injustice †, adultery,

* The universal admiration with which the story of *Atilius Regulus* has been received and repeated, I consider as a good proof, that this is the natural sense of mankind. His conduct upon other principles would appear extravagant and ridiculous.

† Is a man warranted to destroy himself, as soon as he believes his life is become useless or burdensome to those about him, and miserable to himself? How shocking in many circumstances would the most private assassination be of a person whose death all may wish for, and consider as a

“ murder,

“murder, perjury, and even persecution, may
“in many supposable cases, not have the ap-
“pearance of being likely to produce an overba-
“lance of misery in the present state; perhaps,
“sometimes, may have a contrary appearance.”

A disapprobation in the human mind of ingratitude, injustice, and deceit, none deny. The point under examination is, the *ground* of this disapprobation; whether it arises solely from views of inconvenience to others and confusion in society occasioned by them; or whether there be not also *immediate wrong* apprehended in them, independently of their effects. The instances and considerations here produced seem sufficiently to determine this. It appears, that they are disapproved when productive of no harm, and even when in some degree beneficial.

“Shall it be still urged, that in cases of this
“kind, our disapprobation is owing to the idea
“of a plan or system of common utility esta-
“blished by custom in the mind with which

benefit to himself and to the world? Who would not severely reproach himself for reserving to himself the property of another which had been lost, and which he had accidentally found, however secretly he might do this, and whatever reason he might have for thinking that it would be of greater use to him than to the proprietor? There would be no end of mentioning cases of this sort, but I have chose to instance particularly in veracity.

“these

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“ these vices are apprehended to be inconsistent ; or to a habit acquired of considering them as of general pernicious tendency, by which we are insensibly influenced, whenever, in any particular circumstances or instances, we contemplate them ? ” —

But why must we have recourse to the influence of habits and associations in this case ? This has been the refuge of those, who would resolve all our moral perceptions into views of private advantage, and may serve to evade almost any evidence, which can be derived from experience, or from an observation of the workings of our minds and the motives of our actions. In the cases which have been mentioned, we may remove entirely the idea of a publick, and suppose no persons existing besides those immediately concerned, or none whose state they can at all influence ; or, we may suppose all memory of the action to be for ever lost as soon as done, and the agent to foresee this ; and yet, the same ideas of the ingratitude, injustice, or violation of truth will remain.— If the whole reason for regarding truth arose from its influence on society, wherein would a primitive Christian have been blameworthy for renouncing his religion, blaspheming Christ, and acknowledging and worshipping

ping the Pagan gods (all which is no more than denying truth) whenever he could purchase his life by these means, and at the same time avoid a discovery, and thus prevent the prejudice that might arise from his conduct to Christians and Pagans?—*Peter*, surely, would not have been innocent in denying his Master with oaths and imprecations, though he had known that he should never be detected. A stranger, in a Pagan country, would not do right to comply with its superstitions, to worship and profess contrary to his real sentiments, and abjure his faith, in order to secure his quiet or life, provided he judged the deceit would not be known, that he could do no good by a different conduct, or that his hypocrisy and compliances had no tendency to establish and perpetuate idolatry. Most persons probably will think they would be very criminal, tho' supposed to have a contrary tendency.

It is further to be observed on this argument, that in these cases it does not appear that mankind in general much attend to distant consequences. Children particularly cannot be supposed to consider these, or to have fixed any ideas of a publick or community; and yet, we observe in them the same aversion to falsehood, and relish for truth, as in the rest of mankind. There is indeed

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no less evidence, that in the cases specified, we approve and disapprove *immediately*, than there is that we do so, when we consider benevolence or cruelty. It has been urged against those who derive all our desires and actions from self-love, that they find out views and reasonings for men, which never entered the minds of most of them ; and which, in all probability, none attend to and are actually influenced by in the common and natural course of their thoughts and pursuits. — The same may be urged against those, who derive all our sentiments of moral good and evil from our approbation of benevolence and disapprobation of the want of it ; and both, in my opinion, have undertaken tasks almost equally impracticable. Any person, one would imagine, who will impartially examine of his own mind, may feel something different in his dislike of several vices from the apprehension of their diminishing happiness or producing misery, and easily observe that it is not merely under these notions, that he always censures and condemns. It is true, this apprehension, when it occurs, always greatly heightens our disapprobation. Falshood, ingratitude, and injustice undermine the foundations of all social intercourse and happiness,

happiness, and the consequences of them, were they to become universal, would ('tis evident) be terrible. — For this reason, supposing morality founded on an arbitrary structure of our minds, there would be a necessity for distinct senses immediately condemning and forbidding them. Leaving them to the influence of a general disapprobation of all actions evidencing a neglect of publick good, or without any particular determination against them, any farther than by every man they should be thought likely to produce more misery than happiness, would be attended with the worst effects. It would not in all likelihood, by any means be sufficient, tolerably to secure the peace and order of human society; especially considering how many amongst mankind there are, who are incapable of enlarged reflexions, and whose thoughts are confined within the narrowest limits, and how little prone all men naturally are, to be affected with or to regard remote events, as well as how liable they are to take up the wrongest opinions of the tendencies of their actions, and the good or ill to the world which they may occasion.

Perhaps, he who should maintain, that we have no affection properly resting in ourselves, but that all our desires and aversions arise from
a prospect

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a prospect of advantage or detriment to others; would not assert what would be much less defensible or more unreasonable than what those assert who maintain the reverse of this, and deny all *disinterested benevolence*.— In like manner, to assert that our approbation of *beneficence* is to be resolved into our approbation of *veracity*, or that the whole of morality consists in *signifying and denying truth*, would not be much more unreasonable than the contrary assertion, that our approbation of *veracity*, and of all that is denominated virtue, is resolvable into the approbation of *beneficence*. But why must there be in the human mind, approbation only of one sort of actions? Why must all moral good be reduced to one particular species of it, and kind affections with the actions flowing from them, be represented, as what alone can appear to our moral faculty *virtuous*? Why may we not as well have an immediate relish also for truth, for candour, sincerity, piety, gratitude, and many other modes and principles of conduct?— Admitting all our ideas of morality to be derived from implanted senses and determinations; the latter of these determinations is equally possible with the other; and what has been above hinted shews that there is the greatest occasion for them to secure the ge-

neral welfare, and that therefore it might antecedently be expected that a good being would give them to us *.

What strange love of uniformity and simplicity is it, that inclines men thus to seek them where it is so difficult to find them? It is this that, on other subjects, has often led men sadly astray. What mistakes and extravagances in natural philosophy have been produced, by the desire of discovering one principle which shall account for every thing, and into which every thing may be reduced? I deny not but that in the human mind, as well as in the corporeal world and all the works of nature, the most wonderful simplicity takes place; but we ought to learn to wait, till we can by careful

* Dr. Hucheson, however he may in general have expressed himself, as if he thought the only object of the *moral sense*, and the whole of virtue, was benevolence, yet appears to have been convinced of the necessity of allowing a *distinct sense*, recommending to us faithfulness and veracity.—See *Philosophiæ moralis institutio compendiaria*, Chap. IX. lib. ii. *Facultatis hujus, sive orationis, comes est et moderator sensus quidam subtilior, ex veri etiam cognoscendi appetitione naturali non parum confirmatus, quo vera omnia, simplicia, fidelia comprobamus; falsa, ficta, fallacia odimus.*—Lib. ii. Chap. X. *Sensu enim cujusque proxime commendatur is sermonis usus, quem communis exigit utilitas.*—*Hoc vero stabile consilium eo tantum utendi sermone, qui cum animi sententia congruit, quique alios non decipit, comprobant et animi sensus per se, et utilitatis communis ratio.*

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observation and enquiry, find out what this is; and wherein it consists; and not suffer ourselves rashly to determine any thing concerning it, or to receive and assert any general causes and principles, which are either inconsistent with or not well supported by experience and fact.

If the account of morality I have given is just, it is not to be conceived, that promoting the happiness of others should comprehend the whole of our duty, or that the consideration of publick good should be that alone in *all* circumstances which can have any influence or concern in determining what is right or wrong. It has been observed, that every different situation of a reasonable creature requires a different manner of acting, and that concerning all things proposed to be done, something is to be affirmed or denied, which, when known, necessarily implies a *direction* to the agent in regard to his behaviour.

Having premised these things, I shall now proceed to enumerate some of the most important *Branches of virtue*, or *heads of absolute rectitude and duty*.

What requires the first place is our DUTY TO GOD, or the whole of that regard, subjection and homage we owe him. These supply us with
unquestionable

unquestionable instances of objects of moral discernment, which are independent of all considerations of utility. They are approved, and conceived as indispensably obligatory, and yet the principle upon which they are practised, cannot be the view of natural good, or an intention, in any manner, to be profitable or serviceable to the object of them. Those persons must be uncommonly weak and ignorant, who mean, by their worship and homage, to make an addition to the happiness of the Deity, or who entertain any apprehensions, that it is on his own account, and to advance his own benefit, he expects their gratitude and prayers. I know, indeed, that some writers of great worth have expressed themselves, as if they doubted, whether the secret spring of all obedience to him, and concurrence with his ends, is not some design to contribute towards his satisfaction and delight. It would be an affront to most readers, to employ much time, in representing the prodigious absurdity of such an opinion. What embarrassments must attend the scheme, from which this follows as a necessary consequence, and which obliges us to maintain what seems so unreasonable?

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Let any pious man, of plain sense and free from gross superstition, be appealed to, and asked, whether he approves of piety to God, as proceeding from a view to his felicity? whether he submits to his will, and worships and prays to him, from an opinion that these, in the literal sense, *please* or gratify him? He would undoubtedly at once, and with abhorrence, disclaim any such sentiments and motives. Upon a little consideration he might say, "he obeyed and worshipped God, because it was *right*, because he apprehended it his *duty*." Should he be asked, why he thought obedience and devotion to God his *duty*? the reply that would first and most naturally occur to him, would be; "because God was the creator, governor, and benefactor of the whole world, and particularly was *his* creator, governor, and benefactor." But should he be once more asked, why he thought it his duty to honour and worship his maker, benefactor, and governor? he would (as well he might) wonder at the question, as much as if he had been asked, why twenty was bigger than two? — Why should we not admit here, the natural and unperverted sentiments of men, and acknowledge, what leaves no difficulty, and seems so evident, that submission

mission, reverence, and devotion to *such* a being as God, are, as much as any behaviour to our fellow-men, instances of *immediate duty intuitively* perceived; the sense of which, equally with kind affections, is a spring and motive of action.

Should it be granted, that in men, through unavoidable imperfections of nature and sentiment, some notion of giving satisfaction, and preventing disgust to the Deity, cannot be easily separated from their religious services; this cannot be supposed of superior beings; nor therefore can their more perfect services, and more absolute resignation, have any such spring.

That the state and happiness of the Deity, cannot be affected by any thing we, or any other beings, can do, no one surely, upon mature consideration, will deny. But let it be only *supposed*, that this is the case; what alterations will follow, as to our duty to him? Would no behaviour, on this supposition, terminating solely in him as its object and end, remain proper? Would it have any effect in releasing the rational creation from their present obligations, and rendering impiety and disobedience less shocking?

'Tis true, all the pious and good are actuated by love to God, which implies joy in his happiness; but this would never produce any acts of

acknowledgement and obedience, or any study of the good of others, in compliance with his intentions ; while there is no apprehension that they can affect his happiness ; and, at the same time, no perception of fitness in them independent of this.

What has been now said, is, in some degree, applicable to superiors and benefactors among inferior beings ; and the grounds of duty, and principles of behaviour to them, are, in their general nature, the same with those of our duty and behaviour to the Deity. A fellow-man may be raised so much above us in station and character, and so little within the reach of any effects of what we can do, that the reason of the respect and submission we pay him, and of our general behaviour to him, cannot be any view to his benefit, but *principally*, or (where private and publick good are not regarded) *solely* the sense of what is in itself right, decent, or becoming. — To all beings, according to their respective natures, characters, abilities, dignity, and relations to us, there are suitable affections and manners of behaviour owing, which, as long as their characters and relations continue the same, are as invariable as the proportion between any particular geometrical figures or quantities. — The higher
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the rank of any being is, the more perfect his nature, the more excellent his character, the more near and intimate his connexions with us, and the greater our obligations to him; the more strict and indispensable duty, or the greater degree of regard, affection, and submission we owe him.

This last observation shews us, what ideas we ought to entertain of the importance of the duty owing to God, and of the place it holds amongst our other duties. There can, certainly, be no proportion between what is due from us to *creatures* and to the *Creator*; between the regard and deference we owe to beings of precarious, derived, and limited goodness, and to him who possesses original, necessary, everlasting, infinite fulness of all that is amiable. As much as this Being surpasses other beings in perfection and excellence, so much is he the worthier object of our veneration and love. As much as we are more dependent upon him, and indebted to him, so much the more absolute subjection, and ardent gratitude may he claim from us. —The whole universe, compared with God, is nothing in itself, nothing to us. He ought then to be *all* to us; his will our unalterable guide; his goodness the object of our constant praise and trust;

the consideration of his all-directing providence our highest joy ; the securing his favour our utmost ambition, and the imitation of his righteousness, the great end and aim of all our actions. He is the fountain of all power and jurisdiction, the cause of all causes, the disposer of the lots and circumstances of all beings, the life and informing principle of all nature ; from whose never-ceasing influence every thing derives its capacity of giving us pleasure ; and in whom, as their source and centre, are united all the degrees of beauty and good that we can observe in the creation. On him then ought our strongest affection and admiration to be fixed, and to him ought our minds to be continually directed. How shameful would it be to forget this Being amidst shadows and vanities, to attend to his *works* more than *himself*, or to regard any thing equally with him ? — It is here, undoubtedly, virtue ought to begin : From hence it should take its rise. A regard to God, as our first and sovereign principle of conduct, should always possess us, accompany us in the discharge of all private and social duties, and govern our whole life. Inferior authority we ought to submit to ; but at the same time ultimately viewing that authority, which is the ground of all other, and
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supreme in nature. Inferior benefactors we should be grateful to, in proportion to our obligations to them, and dependence upon them; but yet considering them as only instruments of his goodness, and reserving our first and chief gratitude to our first and chief benefactor. The gifts of his bounty, the objects to which he has adapted our faculties, and the means of happiness he has provided for us, we should accept and enjoy; but it would be disingenuous and base to do it, with little consideration of the giver, or with hearts void of emotion towards him. Every degree of real worth we observe among inferior beings should be properly acknowledged, and esteemed; but yet as being no more than rays from his glory, and faint resemblances of his perfections. Created excellence and beauty we may and must admire; but it would be inexcusable to be so much taken up with these, as to overlook him, who is the root of every thing good and lovely, and before whom all other excellence vanishes. To him through all inferior causes we ought to look; and his hand, it becomes us to own and adore, in all the phænomena of nature, and in every event. The consideration of his presence with us, should affect us more, and be an unspeakably

stronger guard and check upon our behaviour, than if we knew we were every moment exposed to the view of the whole creation. We ought to love him above all things, to throw open our minds, as much as possible, to his influence, and keep up a constant intercourse with him, by prayer and unaffected devotion. We ought to refer ourselves absolutely to his management, rely implicitly on his care, commit, with boundless hope, our whole beings to him *in well-doing*, and *wish* for nothing, at any time, but what is most acceptable to his wisdom and goodness. — In short, he ought to have, in all respects, the supremacy in our minds ;— every action and design should be sacred to him ; reverence, admiration, hope, joy, desire of approbation, and all the affections suited to such an object, should discover and exert themselves within us, in the highest degree we are capable of them. An union to him, by a resemblance and participation of his perfections, we should aspire to, as our complete dignity and happiness, beyond which there can be nothing worthy the concern of any being. No rebellious inclination should be once indulged ; no murmur, in any events, shew itself, in our minds ; and no desire or thought ever entertained by

us, which is inconsistent with cheerful allegiance, a zealous attachment, and an inviolable loyalty of heart to his government.

These are some of the chief particulars of our duty to the Deity; and it naturally here offers itself to our observation, how extremely defective the characters of those persons are, who, whatever they may be in other respects, live in the neglect of God. Nothing, indeed, can be more melancholy, than to see so many of mankind, capable of maintaining a good opinion of themselves, though they know themselves habitually regardless of devotion and piety, inattentive to the Author of all good, and little under the power of his fear and love. Can any one seriously think, that a misbehaviour of this kind is not as truly inconsistent with goodness of temper and sound virtue, and in the same manner destructive of the foundations of hope and bliss, as any other misbehaviour? Do neglect and ingratitude, when men are the objects of them, argue *great* evil of temper, but *none* when the governor of the world is their object? Why should *impiety* be less criminal than *dishonesty*? The former of these, 'tis true, is not generally looked upon with the same aversion and disgust as the latter; nor does it cause an equal
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forfeiture of credit and reputation in the world. This may be owing, partly, to the more immediate and pernicious influence of the latter on our own interest, and that of others; but it is, perhaps, chiefly to be accounted for, from a more strong *instinctive* aversion wrought into our frame against the latter. 'Tis obvious, this was necessary to preserve the peace and happiness of society: For had men no greater horror at *injustice and fraud*, and nothing more in their natures and circumstances to deter them from them, than they have with respect to *irreligion*, they would become equally prevalent, and the most fatal effects follow.—But when we consider these vices in themselves, and as they appear to the eye of cool and unbiassed reason, we cannot think that there is less absolute evil in the latter than in the former.

Every man, as far as he discharges private and social duties, is to be loved and valued, nor can any thing be said that ought in reason to discourage him. Whatever good any person does, or whatever degree of real virtue he possesses, he is sure, in some way or other, to be the better for. Though it should not be such as can avail to his happiness at last, or save him from just condemnation; yet it will, at least,
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render him so much the less guilty and unhappy. — But, in truth, as long as men continue void of religion and piety, there is great reason to apprehend they are destitute of the genuine principle of virtue, and possess but little true moral worth and goodness. Their good behaviour in other instances, may probably flow more from the influence of instinct and natural temper, or from the love of distinction, credit, and private advantages, than from a sincere regard to what is *reasonable* and *fit as such*. Were this the principle that chiefly influenced them, they would have an equal regard to *all* duty; they could not be easy in the omission of any thing they know to be right, and especially not in the habitual neglect of him, with whom they have infinitely more to do, than with all the world. — He that forgets God and his government, presence and laws, wants the main support, and the living root of inward, genuine virtue, as well as the most fruitful source of tranquillity and joy: Nor can he, with due exactness, care, and faithfulness, be supposed capable of performing his duties to himself and others. He that is without the proper affections to the author of his being, or who does not study to cultivate them by those acts and exercises, which are the natural

tural and necessary expressions of them, should indeed be ashamed to make any pretensions to integrity and goodness of character. — “ The
 “ knowledge and love of the Deity, the uni-
 “ versal mind, is as natural a perfection to
 “ such a being as man, as any accomplishment
 “ to which we arrive by cultivating our natu-
 “ ral dispositions ; nor is that mind come to the
 “ proper state and vigour of its kind, where
 “ religion is not the main exercise and de-
 “ light.” *

* *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, by Dr. Hucheson, Sect. 6. See also his *System of Moral Philosophy*, Chap. X. Book I. Vol. i. where may be found an excellent account of the worship and affections due to God, and of their importance to our perfection and happiness. — See likewise the *Characteristicks*, Vol. ii. p. 76. “ Hence we may de-
 “ termine justly the relation which virtue has to piety ;
 “ the first being not complete but in the latter : Since
 “ where the latter is wanting, there can neither be the
 “ same benignity, firmness, or constancy ; the same good
 “ composure of the affections, or uniformity of mind.
 “ And thus the perfection and height of virtue must be ow-
 “ ing to the belief of a God.” — And elsewhere, “ Man
 “ is not only born to virtue, friendship, honesty, and faith,
 “ but to religion, piety, adoration, and a generous sur-
 “ render of his mind to whatever happens from that su-
 “ preme cause, or order of things, which he acknow-
 “ ledges entirely just and perfect.” Vol. iii. p. 224. —
 “ My design is this, to make you free and happy, always
 “ looking unto God in every small and in every great
 “ matter.” Εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἀφορῶντας ἐν παντὶ μικρῷ καὶ
 μεγάλῳ. *Epiet.* apud *Arr.* Lib. ii. cap. 19. — “ Nothing,
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It must, however, be added, that the persons who fall into the contrary extreme, are, upon all accounts, the most inexcusable and wicked; I mean, those who pretend to religion without benevolence, without honesty; who are zealously devout, but at the same time, envious, peevish, perverse, spiteful, and can cheat and trick, lie and calumniate. Nothing can be conceived more inconsistent, more shameful, or more intolerable than this. The solemn worship and services of such are the highest possible aggravations of their guilt. The regard they pretend for God, is an abuse and mockery of him; and their religion the worst sort of *blasphemy*. Religion furnishes us with the strongest motives to social duties; it lays us under abundant, additional obligations to perform them; and it is the tendency and nature of it to improve our zeal for all that is just and good, to increase our love of all men, and to render us more gentle, mild, fair, candid, and upright, in proportion to the degree in which it truly possesses our hearts. He, therefore, who, while under any influence from this, and with the

says *M. Antoninus*, "is well done, that is done without a
"respect to the divine nature." Οὐκ ἀνθρώπων τι ἀρεῖ
τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ θεὰ συναναπόρας ἐν μεγάλῃς. Lib. iii.
Sect. 13.

idea of God in his mind, does any thing wrong, or commits any evil, is so much the more blameable, and shews proportionably greater degeneracy and viciousness of character.

Before we quit this subject, I cannot help begging the reader to pause a while, and to consider particularly, what is meant by the will of God, and how important and awful a motive to action it implies.

What can have a tendency to impress an attentive mind so deeply, or strike it with so much force, as to think, in any circumstances, "God *wills* me to *do*, or to *bear* this?" One such reflexion should be enough at all times to disarm the strongest temptations, to silence every complaint, to defeat all opposition, and to inspire us with the most inflexible courage and resolution. Did we take more leisure to attend to this, we could not possibly behave as we often do. He that, when solicited to any thing unlawful, will but stop, 'till he has duly attended to the *sense*, and felt the *weight* of this truth; "the Deity disapproves, and forbids my compliance," must tremble at the thought of complying, and lose all inclination to it. When we think who God is, and what his dominion and character are; nothing can
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appear so shocking to us, as that helpless, indigent beings, his own offspring, the effects of his power, and the objects of his constant care and bounty, should counteract his intentions, and rebel against his authority, or be dissatisfied with what he appoints. The most loud applauses and general friendship of our fellow-creatures, are nothing, and can have no effect, when separated from his. All opposition is impotence, when not approved by him: And the command and threats of all the world, could they be supposed to interfere with what we know he requires from us, would, if we had a just sense of things, be as much lost to us, as a whisper in the midst of thunder, or the attention to a toy, in the moment of instant death and ruin.

What it is he wills, we can in general be at no loss to know. Whatever afflictions or disappointments happen to us; whatever pains we feel, or unavoidable inconveniencies are mingled with the lot assigned us; these it is as certain that he wills us to bear, and to acquiesce in, as it is that we at all suffer by them: Since it is demonstrable, that in his world, and under his eye, nothing can befall us either *contrary* to, or *without* his consent and direction. Whatever opportunities fall in our way of doing
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good, it is his will that we embrace and improve. Whatever our consciences dictate to us, and we know to be *right* to be done, *that* he commands more evidently and undeniably, than if by a voice from heaven we had been called upon to do it. — And, when conscious of faithful endeavours to be and do every thing that we ought to be and do, with what joy of heart may we look up to him, and exult in the assurance of his approbation? When employed in acts of kindness and love, in forming good habits, and practising truth and righteousness; how resolute and immoveable must it render an upright person, and with what fortitude and ardor may it possess his breast, to consider; “ I am doing the will of him to
 “ whom the world owes its birth, and whom
 “ the whole creation obeys: I am following
 “ the example, imitating the perfections, and
 “ securing the friendship and love of that Being,
 “ who *is* everlasting truth and righteousness;
 “ who cannot, therefore, be conceived
 “ to be indifferent to those who practise them;
 “ and who, withal, possesses infinite power,
 “ and can cause all nature to furnish out its
 “ stores to bless me? ”

Thus does religion elevate the mind; and such is the aid, and force, and majesty it gives
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to virtue. The most effectual means of forming a good temper, and establishing good dispositions, is the contemplation of the divine administration and goodness. We cannot have our minds too intent upon them, or study enough to make every thought pay homage to the Divinity, and to hallow our whole conversation by an habitual regard to him whose prerogative it is, as the first cause and the original of all perfection, to be the guide and end of all the actions of his creatures.

It will, I suppose, scarcely be thought by the most cursory reader, that what has been now said, lays greater stress upon *will*, and ascribes more to it, than is consistent with former assertions, and with the foundation of morals I have defended.

It has not been asserted, that, *of itself*, it can have any effect on morality, or be an end and rule of action. If we consider it as denoting either the general power of producing effects, or the actual exertion of this power; it is most manifest, that it implies nothing of a *rule*, *direction*, or *motive*, but is entirely ministerial, and subordinate to these, and supposes them as things higher, distinct, and independent. *Understanding* is, in the nature of it, before *will*; *knowledge* before *power*; it be-

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ing necessary, that every intelligent agent, in exerting his power, should *know* what he does, or design some effect, which he *understands* or *conceives* to be possible. The general idea of *will* is applicable alike to all beings capable of design, desire, and action; and, therefore, merely as will, it can never be obeyed, or have any influence on our determinations.

What renders obedience to the will of God a duty of so high and indispensable a nature, is this very consideration, that it is the *will of God*; the will of the universal and almighty Parent, benefactor, and ruler; a will which is in necessary union with perfect rectitude, which always executes the dictates of it, and which, whenever made known, directs to what is absolutely *best*. When we obey this then, it is *unerring rectitude*, it is the *voice of eternal wisdom* we obey; and it is then, therefore, we act most wisely and reasonably.

The *second* branch of virtue, which we may take notice of, is that which has *ourselves* for its object. There is, undoubtedly, a certain manner of conduct terminating in our own natures, which is properly matter of *duty* to us. 'Tis too absurd to be maintained by
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any one, that there is nothing right or wrong respecting ourselves; and that no relation, which an action may have to our own happiness or misery, can (supposing other beings unconcerned) have any influence in determining, whether it is, or is not to be done, or make it appear to rational and calm reflexion, otherwise than *morally indifferent*. — 'Tis contradictory to suppose, that the same necessity which makes an end to us, and determines us to the choice and desire * of it, should be unaccompanied with an approbation of using the means of attaining it. It is, in reality, no more morally indifferent, how we employ our faculties, and what we do relating to our own state and interest, than it is how we behave to our fellow-creatures. If it is my duty to promote the good of *another*, and to abstain from hurting him; the same, most certainly, must be my duty with regard to *myself*. It would be contrary to all reason to deny this; or to assert that I *ought* to consult the good of another, but not my own; or that the advantage an action will produce to another, makes it right to be done, but that an equal advantage to myself, leaves me at liberty to do or omit

* See last Section of Chapter I. page 68.

it.— So far is this from being true, that it will be strange, if any one can avoid acknowledging that it is right and fit that a being should, when all circumstances on both sides are equal, *prefer* himself to another; reserve, for example to *himself*, a certain means of enjoyment he possesses, rather than part with it to a *stranger*, to whom it will not be *more* beneficial.

'Tis evident, that this affords us another instance of right behaviour, the principle of which is not kind affection, and which no views of public utility or sympathy with others can possibly explain. What can prove more incontestably that actions evidencing kind affections are not the only ones we approve, than our approving in many cases of the prevalency of self-love against them, and our being conscious that in these cases it should thus prevail? Private concerns and interest afford us, indeed, the fullest scope for virtue; and the practice of this branch of it is no less difficult, and requires no less resolution and zeal, than the practice of any other branch of it. Our lower principles and appetites are by no means always friendly to true self-love. They almost as often interfere with this as with benevolence. We continually

see men, through the influence of them, acting in opposition to their own acknowledged interest, as well as to that of others, and sacrificing to them their fortunes, healths, and lives. — Now, in cases of this kind, when a person is tempted to forego his own happiness by a present, importunate appetite, it is as really virtuous and praise-worthy to overcome the temptation, and preserve a steady regard to his own interest, as it is to perform any acts of justice, or to overcome temptations to be dishonest or cruel. Restraining licentious passions; strict temperance, sobriety, and chastity; rejecting *present* for *future greater* good; governing all our inferior powers, so as that they shall never disturb the order of our minds; acting up to the dignity and hopes of reasonable and immortal beings; and the uniform, wise, and steadfast pursuit of our own true interest and perfection, in opposition to whatever difficulties may come in our way; these things are virtues, and very important virtues. We have it not in our power to avoid approving and admiring them—On the contrary; an undue neglect of our own good; folly and imprudence; intemperance and voluptuousness; sensuality and extravagance;

acting beneath our characters, profession, and expectations ; confining our thoughts and ambition to low and transitory objects, to shadows and vanity, when we might fix them on objects of inestimable worth and eternal duration ; following every blind passion and humour to beggary and distress, and yielding up to them our liberty and independence, inward tranquillity and self-enjoyment, the principal blessings of this life, and the prospect of future happiness ; these things, however hurtful to none but the agent himself, are by all condemned as vicious and criminal : The guilty person meets with the severest reproaches, and necessarily appears to himself and others base and despicable. The selfishness we blame, is such a regard to our own gratification, and such an attention to a narrow and partial private interest, as engrosses too much of our labour, contracts our hearts, excludes a due concern for others and a proper regard to their good, and stifles or checks the exercise of benevolence, friendship, and generosity. Where nothing of this sort takes place, the care of *self* is never censured, but always expected and praised.

It should not, however, be overlooked, that acting with a view to private advantage
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does not so generally and certainly prove virtuous intention, as acting with a view to public good ; and that, in rejecting an evil to ourselves, or embracing a good to ourselves, when it is sensible and at hand, and no opposition arises from any interfering desires and propensions, the virtuous effort and design, and, consequently, the degree of virtue in the agent, can be but small. But of these things more fully hereafter.

For the reason, why we have not so sensible an indignation against neglect of private good, as against many other instances of wrong behaviour, see what is said under the fourth observation in *The dissertation on virtue*, at the end of *Butler's Analogy*.

Thirdly, Another part of rectitude is BENEFICENCE, or the study of the good of others. Publick happiness is an object that must necessarily determine all minds to prefer and desire it. It is of essential and unchangeable value and importance ; and there is not any thing which appears to our thoughts with greater light and evidence, or which we have more undeniably an intuitive perception of, than that it is *right* to promote and pursue it. — So

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important a part of virtue is this, and so universally acknowledged, that it is become a considerable subject of debate, whether it be not the whole of virtue.

As under the preceding head, it has been observed, that it would be strange that the good of another should make an action fit to be performed, but our own good not; the contrary observation may be here made; namely, that it cannot be consistently supposed that our own good should make an action fit to be performed, but that of others not.

All sensitive and rational beings ought to have a share in our kind wishes and affections: But we are surrounded with *fellow-men*, beings of the same nature, in the same circumstances, and having the same wants with ourselves; to whom therefore we are in a peculiar manner linked and related, and whose happiness and misery depend very much on our behaviour to them. These considerations engage us to labour particularly to be useful to mankind, and to cultivate to the utmost the principle of benevolence to them. And how amiable does the man appear in whose breast this divine principle reigns; who studies to make all with whom he has any connexion easy and happy; who loves others as he desires others to love him; whose joy is their joy, and misery
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their misery; who is humane, patient, humble, and generous; never gives the least indulgence to any harsh or unfriendly dispositions, and comprehends in what he thinks *himself* his relations, friends, neighbours, country, and species?

Fourthly, The next head of virtue proper to be mentioned is GRATITUDE. The consideration that we have received benefits, lays us under *peculiar* obligations to the persons who have conferred them; and renders that behaviour, which to others may be innocent, to them criminal. That this is not to be looked upon as the effect merely of the utility of gratitude, appears, I think, sufficiently from the citation at the beginning of this chapter.

With respect to this part of virtue, it is proper to observe, that it is but one out of a great variety of instances, wherein particular facts and circumstances constitute a fitness of a different behaviour to different persons, independently of its consequences. The different moral qualifications of different persons; their different degrees of nearness to us in various respects; and numberless circumstances in their state, situations, and characters, have the like effect, and give just reason, in innumerable instances,

instances, for a preference of some of them to others. Some of these circumstances may be of so little moment in themselves, that almost any appearance or possibility of greater good may suspend their influence ; although, when there is no such appearance, and all other things are equal, they have full effect in determining what is *right*, or what *ought* to be done.— A fact of the same kind with this, we shall have occasion to mention under the head of *justice*.

What will be most beneficial or productive of the greatest publick good, I acknowledge to be the most general and leading consideration in all our enquiries concerning *right* ; and so important is it, when the publick interest depending is very considerable, that it may set aside every obligation which would otherwise arise from the common rules of justice, from promises, private interest, friendship, gratitude, and all particular attachments and connexions.

Fifthly, VERACITY is a most important part of virtue. Of this a good deal has been already said. As it has some connexion with and dependence upon the *different sentiments* and *affections* of our minds with respect to *truth* and *falsehood*, it will not be improper to be a little more particular than I have hitherto been, in giving an account of the reason and foundation of these.

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The difference between truth and falsehood, is the same with that between entity and non-entity; and infinitely greater, than the difference between realities and chimeras or fictions; because the latter have a real existence *in the mind*, and so far, also a *possible, external* existence.—There is indeed an imaginary reality, which we are obliged always to cloath falsehood with, in order at all to write or speak of it; but this is derived entirely from the reality of its contrary. So, likewise, we commonly speak of *disorder*, *silence*, and *darkness*, as if they denoted somewhat positive; whereas, whatsoever positive ideas we can have when we mention them, must be the ideas of the things themselves, of which they are negations; and, were it not for these, there could be no words for them. — Now, it cannot be conceived, that something and nothing, what is empty and unsubstantial, and what is positive, real, and steadfast, should be regarded by the mind in the same manner and with the same sentiments. Truth must be pleasing and desirable to an intelligent nature; nor can it be otherwise than disagreeable to it, to find itself seduced into error and mocked with shadows. As much error as there is in any mind, so much darkness is there in it; so much, if I may so express myself, is it less distant from non-existence.

istence. As much truth as it is in possession of, so much has it of perception, of knowledge, of existence, and perfection. To disaffect truth or to love error, is to desire to see nothing as it is, that is, to desire to see nothing at all. We often indeed are pleased with finding that we have been mistaken ; but it is never the having been mistaken that pleases, but some good or advantage it was the occasion of to us. In the same sense, an act of villainy may please us ; that is, some of its consequences or circumstances may please us, not the villainy itself. We frequently delight in our errors, but not as errors, but as the contrary. As soon as we discover or become sensible in any instance that we err, so far in that instance we no longer err ; and this discovery is always in itself grateful to us, for the same reason that truth is so. — In short, we shall, I believe, find, in whatever light we consider this subject, that the notion of the arbitrariness of the relish we have for truth, or of the distinction we make in our inward regards between it and falsehood, implies what is impossible and contradictory.

Truth then, is not susceptible of any affections to it that may be arbitrarily appointed, but necessarily recommends itself to our preference and approbation. Now, the essence of *lying*, consisting in using established and determinate

minate signs in order to deceive or to produce assent to what is false, it must be disapproved by all rational beings upon the same grounds with those on which truth and knowledge are valuable and desirable to them, and right judgment preferred by them to mistake and ignorance.— No beings, supposed alike indifferent to truth and falsehood, and careless which they embrace, can be well conceived to take offence at any imposition upon themselves or others ; and he who will not say, that, consequences apart, (which is all along supposed) to *know* is not better than to *err*, or that there is nothing to determine any being *as rational*, to chuse wisdom rather than folly, just apprehensions rather than wrong, certainty rather than delusion, to be awake and actually to see rather than to be in a continual dream or delirium (which how can any one conceive to be otherwise than utterly inconsistent with the ideas of reason, and an intelligent nature?) He, I say, who will not maintain this, will scarcely be unwilling to acknowledge an *immediate rectitude in veracity*.

Under this head, I would comprehend impartiality and honesty of mind in our enquiries after truth, as well as a strict and sacred regard to it in all we say ; fair and ingenuous dealing ; such an openness and simplicity of temper and behaviour as exclude guile and prevarication,
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and all the contemptible arts of craft, equivocation and hypocrisy; fidelity to our engagements; sincerity and uprightness in our transactions with ourselves as well as others; and the careful avoiding of all secret attempts to deceive ourselves, and to evade or disguise the truth in examining our own characters and tempers.

Some of these things, though they properly belong to the division of rectitude, I have now in view, and which has truth for its object; yet are not properly included in the signification of *veracity*. — But it requires our notice, that fidelity to promises is *properly* a branch or instance of *veracity*. — * The nature and obligation of *promises* have been represented as attended with great difficulties; which makes it necessary to desire that this observation may be particularly weighed and considered.

By a *promise*, some declaration is made, or assurance given to another, which brings us under an obligation to act or not to act, from which we should have been otherwise free. Such an obligation never flows merely from declaring a resolution or intention; and therefore a promise must mean more than this; and the whole difference is, that the one relates to

* See treatise of human nature. Vol. III. Book III. part II. sect. V.

the *present*, the other to *future* time.— When I say I *intend* to do an action, I affirm only a present fact.— But to *promise*, is to declare that such a thing *shall* be done by the promiser, or that such and such events *shall* happen. In this case, it is not enough to acquit me from the charge of falshood that I intend to do what I promise, but the thing must be actually done, and the events actually happen agreeably to the assurances given. After declaring a *resolution* to do a thing, a man is under no obligation actually to do it, because he did not say he would ; his word and veracity are not engaged ; and the non-performance cannot infer the guilt of violating truth. On the contrary, when a person declares he will actually do a thing, he becomes obliged to do it, and cannot afterwards omit it, without incurring the imputation of declaring falshood, as really as if he had declared what he knew to be a false past or present fact ; and in much the same manner as he would have done, if he had pretended to know, and had accordingly asserted, that a certain event would happen at a certain time, which yet did not then happen. There is, however, a considerable difference between this last case, and the falshood implied in breaking promises and engagements ; for the object of these is something

something, the existence of which depends on ourselves, and which we have in our power to bring to pass ; and therefore here the falshood must be known and wilful, and entirely imputable to our own neglect and guilt. But in the case of events predicted which are not subject to our dominion, the blame, as far as there may be any, must arise from pretending to knowledge which we really want, and asserting absolutely what we are not sure of.

To *promise* then, being to assert a fact dependent on ourselves, with an intention to produce faith in it, and reliance upon it, as certainly to happen, in the mind of another; the obligation to keep a promise is the same with the obligation to observe and regard truth ; and the intention of it cannot be in the sense some have asserted, to will or create a new obligation ; unless it can be pretended that the obligation to veracity is created anew by the mere breath of men every time they speak or make any professions. If indeed we mean by creating a new obligation, that the producing a particular effect or performance of an external action becomes fit, in consequence of some new situation of a person, or some preceding acts of his own, which was not fit before ; it may be very well
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acknowledged ; nor is there any thing in the least mysterious in it. Thus, performance becomes our duty after a promise, in the same sense, that repentance becomes our duty in consequence of doing wrong, reparation of an injury, in consequence of committing it, or a particular manner of conduct and series of actions, in consequence of placing ourselves in particular circumstances and relations of life.

As a confirmation of this account, if any confirmation was necessary, it might be observed, that false declarations in general, and violations of engagements, admit of the same extenuations or aggravations according to the different degrees of solemnity with which they are made, and the different importance of the subjects or matter of them.

The last part of virtue, I shall mention, is JUSTICE. This word is sometimes used to signify the whole of virtue and righteousness ; but, most commonly, it is more confined in its signification, and means, either that part of universal righteousness which concerns our behaviour to mankind, or, yet more restrictively, that part of righteousness which regards *property* and *commerce*. In this last sense it is now used.

The original of the idea of *property* is the same with that of right and wrong in general.

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It denotes such a relation of a particular object to a particular person, as infers or implies, that it is fit he should have the use and disposal of it rather than others, and that it is wrong to deprive him of it. This is what every one means by calling a thing his *right*, or saying that it is *his own*.

Upon this there are two questions that may be asked. *First*, How a thing obtains this relation to a person?—*Secondly*, Into what we are to resolve, and how we are to account for the right and wrong we perceive in these instances?

The writers of *Ethicks* are very well agreed in their answers to the first of these questions. An object, it is obvious, will acquire the relation which has been mentioned to a person, in consequence of first possession; in consequence of its being the fruit of his labour; by donation, succession, and many other ways and circumstances, not necessary to be here enumerated.

It is far from being so generally agreed, what is the true foundation and account of this: But I cannot find any peculiar difficulties attending it. Numberless are the facts and circumstances, which vary and modify the general law of right, or alter the relations of particular

cular effects to it. Taking possession of an object, and using and disposing of it as I please, is, abstracted from all particular circumstances attending such conduct, entirely innocent ; but suppose the object was before possessed by another, the fruit of whose labour it was, and who consents not to be deprived of it, and then this conduct becomes wrong ; not merely upon the account of its consequences, but *immediately and self-evidently wrong*. — Taking to ourselves the absolute enjoyment and dominion of a thing when quite loose from all our fellow-creatures, or not related to them in any of the ways which determine property, cannot be the same with doing this, when the contrary is true ; nor is it possible to frame the same moral judgment concerning an action in these different circumstances. — That *first possession, prescription, donation, succession, &c.* should be things which after the *nature of a case*, determine right and wrong, and induce obligation, where otherwise we should have been free, is not less conceivable or easy to be allowed, than that benefits received, private or publick interest, the will of certain beings, or any of the other considerations before insisted on, should have this effect. There is no other account to be given of these things, than that “ such is
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“ truth, such the nature of things”. And this account, wherever it distinctly appears, is ultimate and satisfactory, and leaves nothing further for the mind to desire or form any notion of.

The limbs, the faculties, and lives of persons are *theirs*, or to be reckoned amongst their *properties*, in much the same sense and upon the same grounds with their external goods and acquisitions. The former differ from the latter, no more than the latter differ among themselves. The right to them is obtained in different ways, but is equally real and certain. And if, antecedently to society and conventions entered into for common convenience, there is no property of the latter kind, and it is naturally indifferent in what manner what we take and detain is related to another ; it will be hard to shew that the same is not true of the other kind of property, or that in reality there can be any right to any thing.

Were nothing meant, when we speak of the *rights* of beings, but that it is for the general utility, that they should have the exclusive and undisturbed enjoyment of such and such things; then, where this is not concerned, a man has no more right to his liberty or his life, than to objects the most foreign to him, or than any
other

other person has ; and having no property, can be no object of injurious or unjust treatment. Supposing two men to live together independently of one another, and unconnected with and unknown to the rest of the world, one of them could possess nothing that did not lie quite open to the seizure of the other, nothing that was *his*, or that he could properly *give* away : There would be nothing wrong in the most wanton and unprovoked invasion or destruction of the reason and the life of the one by the other, supposing this in the other's power, and that in any circumstances he knew he should gain as much by it as the other would lose. What little reason then have we, upon these principles, for rejecting the opinion that a state of nature is a state of war ?

These observations may be more clearly applied to independent societies of men, who are to be looked upon as in a state of nature with respect to one another, and amongst whom it is very strange (as whatever one of them can take from the other may be equally useful to both) that the notions of *property* and *injustice* should prevail almost as much as amongst private persons, if these notions are not natural, or if derived wholly from the consideration of publick good. But besides, if publick

good be the sole measure and foundation of *property* and of the *rights* of beings, it would be absurd to say *innocent* beings have a right to exemption from misery, or that they may not be made in any degree completely and entirely miserable, if but the smallest degree of *prepol-
lent* good can arise from it. Nay, any number of innocent beings might be placed in a state of absolute and eternal misery, provided amends is made for this misery by producing at the same time a greater number of beings in a greater degree happy. For wherein would this be worse than producing a less rather than a greater degree of good, or than producing the excess only of the happiness above the misery, without any degree of the latter? What makes the difference between communicating happiness to a *single being* in such a manner, as that it shall be only the excess of his enjoyments above his sufferings; and communicating happiness to a *system of beings* in such a manner, as that a great number of them shall be totally and extremely miserable, but a greater number happy? Would there be nothing in such a procedure that was not right and just, especially could we conceive the sufferings of the unhappy part to be, in any way, the occasion or means of greater happiness to the rest?

Is a man, let his relations or his benefactions to another be what they will, capable of receiving no injury from him by any actions not detrimental to the publick? Might a man innocently ruin any number of his fellow-creatures, provided he causes in a greater degree the good of others? Such consequences are plainly contradictory and shocking to our natural sentiments; but I know not how to avoid them on the principles I am examining. — It is indeed far from easy to determine what degree of superior good would compensate the irreparable and undeserved ruin of one person; or what overbalance of happiness would be great enough to justify the absolute misery of one innocent being *. Be these things however as they will; there is at least

* There are some things, says *Cicero*, so foul that a good man would not do them to save his country, *De Officiis*, Lib. I. Chap. XLV.—He praises *Fabius* the Roman general, for sending back to *Pyrrhus* a deserter, who had offered privately to poison him for a proper reward from the *Romans*: And also *Aristides* for rejecting, because not just, a proposal very profitable to his country, made to him by *Themistocles*. lb. Lib. III. Chap.—XXII. — To the question, would not a good man, when starving with hunger, force food from another man who is worthless? he answers, by no means; and gives this reason for it. *Non enim mihi est vita mea utilior, quam animi talis affectio, neminem ut violem commodi mei gratia*.— The like answer he gives to the question, whether a good man would, in order to save his life in a shipwreck, thrust a worthless man from a plank he had seized.

enough in the considerations now proposed to shew that publick happiness cannot be the sole standard and measure of justice and injustice. But, without having recourse to them, the decision of this question might perhaps be rested entirely on the determination any impartial person shall find himself obliged to give in the following case.—Imagine any object which cannot be divided or enjoyed in common by two persons, and which also would be of equal advantage to both: Is it not fit, setting aside all distant consequences, that the *first possessor*, or he whose skill and labour had procured it, should have the use and enjoyment of it rather than the other? The affirmative in this case is exceeding clear and obvious; † and he who admits it, cannot think that there is no such origin of property as I have assigned.

Ib. Chap. XXIII. — His decision also in the case of the famine at *Rhodes* is well known:

* There is now less occasion for saying much on this point, since Dr. *Hutcheson* in his system of moral philosophy not long since published, Book II. p. 253, &c. Ch. III. has acknowledged that we *immediately* approve of private justice as well as of veracity, without referring them to a system or to publick interest. But I know not well how to reconcile with this his general method of treating the subject of justice and rights, and particularly his saying in the same chap. that the ultimate notion of a *right*, is that which *tends to the universal good*, p. 266.—His chapter

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What may have contributed towards deceiving some here, is the connexion observable in general between cruelty and injustice; but were these more inseparable than they are, we should have no reason for confounding them. A little reflexion may shew an unbiaſſed person, that the notion of an action's being *unjuſt* is different from that of its being *cruel, inhuman, or unkind*. How else could the guilt of a *cruel* action appear always highly aggravated by its being likewise *unjuſt*? I am ſenſible it may be replied to this, that the injustice attending an act of cruelty; adding to the private damage done by it, a damage alſo to the publick, makes it appear more cruel, and therefore more vicious: But how can it be imagined that remote conſiderations of ill effects to the publick (many of which are not immediately diſcovered by thoſe who ſearch for them) are always adverted to by the bulk of men, ſo as to make the ſimple and illiterate in ſome caſes even better judges

on the *rights of neceſſity*, Vol. II. may be particularly worth conſulting on this occaſion; in which he ſeems to allow, that ſome laws may be ſo *ſacred* (ſuch as thoſe forbidding perjury, abjuring the true God, and particular kinds of treachery and injustice) that ſcarce any pleas of neceſſity to prevent impending evils, or obtain ſuperior good, will juſtify a departue from them. One cannot help conſidering here, what it is he means by the *ſacredneſs* of a law. Surely, not its importance as a means of private or publick good; for this would make even a doubt on this point ridiculous.

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of what is just and unjust, than the learned and studious? Or how can any one think that the guilt of actions producing on the whole damages strictly equal, would not appear aggravated, if accompanied with injury and injustice?

An observation already made, is no where more obvious and remarkable, than on the subject we are now examining. When all things are precisely equal, and no one can pretend that a thing belongs to him rather than another, the most minute circumstance is sufficient to turn the ballance, and to confer a true and full right. Thus, a remote relation to what is my property, contiguity, first sight, and innumerable other things in themselves frivolous, will give ground for a claim, which when nothing equivalent can be opposed to them, shall be good and valid.

The power a person has to transfer his property and arbitrarily to dispose of it, is part of the idea of property, and equally intelligible with the power he has to dispose of his labour or advice, and to employ them in whatever way, upon whatever conditions, and for whatever purposes he thinks proper.

It may tend to remove some further difficulties, which may occur to one who closely considers

considers this subject, to remark again, that amongst near relations and intimate friends, and also with respect to useful objects of which there is no scarcity, the ideas of property are always relaxed in proportion to the greater intimacy of the relation or friendship, and the degree of plenty. The reason in the first case, may be chiefly the consent of the proprietor, which where known or reasonably presumed, always removes the unlawfulness of taking and employing what belongs to them. Between married persons there has been an actual and formal surrender of their respective possessions to one another : and between intimate friends, though no professions may have passed directly expressing such a surrender, there is always understood to prevail that benevolence, mutual regard, and union which imply it. In the latter case, there is also a tacit and presumed consent and surrender ; for no one can be conceived to be unwilling to resign, or at all to attach himself to any thing, the loss of which he can immediately and with perfect ease repair. Besides, enquiries concerning rights, are only proper, as far as an object is of some value, real, or imaginary, mediate or immediate. To ask to whom belongs the property of what is of no value, is trifling and absurd : It is the same

same as to ask who ought to have the use of what is of no use. Now any *particular portion* of natural supplies which are so common as to bear no price, as water or air, is to be deemed really worthless, and so far no object of property. It is not certainly in the least wonderful, that objects procurable without any trouble; which can be the produce of no one's labour; which when taken from persons are always replaced immediately by others of the same value; and a sufficient quantity of which none can want: It is not, I say, in the least wonderful that objects of this kind, should be incapable of acquiring the relation of property to particular persons, and that no injustice should be possible to be committed by any seizure or detention of them. No objections then can, with any reason, be raised from hence against the account that has been given of property.

The particular rules of *justice* are various, and there are many instances in which it is difficult to determine what it requires. Of these it is not requisite that I should take any notice: But it is very proper to observe, that, though I cannot allow publick good to be the *sole* original of justice, yet, undoubtedly, it has great influence upon it, and is one important
reason

reason or ground of many of its maxims and laws: It gives a very considerable additional force and sanction to the rights of men, and, in some cases, entirely creates them.—Nothing is more evident than that, in order to the happiness of the world and the being of society, possessions should be stable, property sacred, and not liable, except upon very extraordinary occasions, to be violated. In considering what common interest requires, we are, besides the immediate effects of actions, to consider what their general tendencies are, what they open and lead the way to, and what would actually be the consequences if all were to act alike. If under the pretence of greater indigence, superfluity to the owner, or intention to give to a worthier person, I may take away a man's property, or adjudge it from him in a court of justice; another or all, in the same circumstances may do so; and thus the boundaries of property would be overthrown, and general anarchy, distrust and savageness be introduced. — Men in general, however, as before observed, do not consider this; much less is it, by some views of this kind and these only, their sentiments on this subject are always influenced and regulated.

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The motives to the practice of justice are the same with those to virtuous practice in general, and will be subject of the next chapter.

I omit taking any particular notice here of *justice*, as it signifies the due treatment of beings according to their different moral characters, or the equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; because treated of sufficiently elsewhere *.

These then are the main and leading branches of Virtue. It may not be possible properly to comprehend all the particular instances of it under any number of heads. It is by attending to the different relations, circumstances, and qualifications of beings, and the natures and tendencies of objects, and by examining into the whole truth of every case, that we judge what *is* or *is not to be* done. And as there is an endless variety of cases, and the situations of agents and things are ever changing; the universal law of rectitude, though in the abstract idea of it always invariably the same, must be continually varying in the ex-

* See Chapter IV.

ternal observance of it, or in its aspect on particular effects and agents.

This leads me to observe, that however different from one another the heads which have been enumerated are, yet, from the very notion of them, as *heads of virtue*, it is plain, that they all run up to one general idea, and should be considered as only different modifications and views of one original, all-governing law *. It is the same authority that enjoins, the same truth and right that oblige, the same eternal reason that directs and commands in them all. Virtue thus considered, is necessarily one thing. No one part of it can be separated from another.

From hence we may learn, by the way, how defective and how inconsistent a thing what we call *partial virtue* is. The same law that requires piety, requires benevolence, requires veracity, temperance, justice, gratitude, &c. All these rest on the same foundation,

* Οὕτω δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν, καὶ εἰ πολλαὶ καὶ πανόδοπα εἰσιν, ἐν γὰρ τι εἶδος ταύτων ἀπ᾿ αὐτῶν ἔχουσιν, δι᾿ ὧν εἰσιν ἀρεταί. *Plat. in Men*: "So also concerning the virtues; though they are many and various, there is one common idea belonging to them all, by which they are virtues".

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and are alike our indispensable duty. He therefore who *lives* in the neglect of any one of them, is as really a rebel against reason, and an apostate from righteousness and order, as if he neglected them all. The authority of the law in one point is not different from its authority in another, and in all. To transgress therefore in one point, I mean habitually and willfully, is to throw off effectually our allegiance, and to trample on the whole authority of the law. True and genuine virtue must be uniform and universal. Nothing short of an *entire* good character can avail. As long as any evil habit is retained, we cannot be denominated the willing loyal subjects of the divine government ; we continue under the curse of guilt ; slaves to vice, and unqualified for bliss. — It will come in our way to observe more to this purpose hereafter.

There is another coincidence between the foregoing heads of virtue worth our notice. I mean, their agreeing very often in requiring the same actions. An act of *justice* may be also an act of *gratitude* and *beneficence* ; and whatever any of these oblige us to, that also *piety* to God requires. Were *injustice*, *fraud*, *falsehood*, and a *neglect* of *private* good universally prevalent,

valent, what a dreadful state would the world be in? and how would the ends of *benevolence* be defeated? No one of the several virtues can be annihilated without the most pernicious consequences to all the rest. This, in a good measure, appears from what happens in the present state of things; but, in the final issue of things, the harmony between them will be found much more strict and wonderful. Whatever exceptions may now happen, if we will look forwards to the whole of our existence, the three great principles of the love of God, the love of man, and true self-love, will always draw us the same way; and we have the utmost reason to assure ourselves, that at last no one will be able to say he has bettered himself by any unjust action, or that, though *less scrupulous* than others, he has been *more successful and happy*.

But tho' the heads of virtue before-mentioned agree thus far in requiring the same course of action, yet they often also interfere. Tho' upon the whole, or when considered as making one *general system or plan of conduct*, there is a strict coincidence between them, yet in examining *single acts* and *particular cases*, we find that they frequently lead us contrary ways.— This perhaps has not been enough attended to, and therefore I shall here particularly insist upon it.

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What creates the difficulty in morals of determining what is right or wrong, in many particular cases, is chiefly the interference now mentioned in such cases between the different general principles of virtue.— Thus, the pursuit of the happiness of others is a duty, and so is the pursuit of private happiness; and though on the whole, these are inseparably connected, in many particular instances, one of them cannot be pursued without giving up the other. When the publick happiness is very great, and the private very inconsiderable, no difficulties appear. We pronounce as confidently, that the one ought to give way to the other, as we do, that either alone ought to be pursued. But when the former is diminished, and the latter increased to a certain degree, doubt arises; and we may thus be rendered entirely incapable of determining what we ought to chuse. We have the most satisfactory perception, that we ought to study our own good, and, within certain limits, prefer it to that of another; but who can say how far, mark precisely these limits, and inform us in all cases of opposition between them, where right and wrong and indifference take place? — In like manner, the nearer attachments of nature or friendship,

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the obligations to veracity, fidelity, gratitude, or justice, may interfere with private and public good, and it is not possible for us to judge always and accurately, what degrees or circumstances of any one of these compared with the others, will or will not cancel its obligation, and justify the violation of it.—It is thus likewise, that the different foundations of property give rise to contrary claims, and that sometimes it becomes very hard to say which of different titles to an object is the best.—If we examine the various intricate and disputed cases in morality, we shall, I believe, find that it is always some interference of this kind that produces the obscurity. Truth and right in any circumstances, it is certain, require but one thing, one determinate way of acting ; but so variously may different obligations be mixed and blended, combine with or oppose each other in particular cases ; and so imperfect are our discerning faculties, that it cannot but happen, that we should be frequently in the dark, and that different persons should judge and decide differently, according to the different views and ideas they have of the several moral principles. Nor is this less unavoidable, or more to be wondered at, than that in matters of mere speculation, we should be at a loss to know what is true, when

the arguments for and against a proposition appear nearly equal.

The principles themselves, it should be remembered, are self-evident; and to conclude the contrary, or to assert that there are no moral distinctions, because of the obscurity attending several cases, wherein a competition arises between the several principles of morality, is very unreasonable. It is not unlike concluding, that, because some things are uncertain, every thing is so; because in some circumstances we cannot, by their appearance to the eye, judge of the distances and magnitude of bodies, therefore we never can; because undeniable principles may be used in proving and opposing particular doctrines, therefore these principles are not undeniable; or because it may not in some instances be easy to determine what will be the effect of different forces, variously compounded and acting contrary to each other; therefore we can have no assurance what any of them acting separately will produce, or so much as know that there is any such thing as force †.

† How unreasonable would it be to conclude from its being often difficult to determine the bounds of *equality* and *inequality* between quantities, or from its appearing doubtful to us in some instances, whether two quantities are the *same* or *different*, that such quantities are in reality, neither equal

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These observations may be of some use in helping us to determine, how far and in what sense, morality is capable of demonstration. There are undoubtedly a variety of moral principles and maxims, which, to gain assent, need only to be understood: And I see not why such propositions as these, "gratitude is due to benefactors; reverence is due to our Creator; it is right to study our own happiness; an innocent being ought not to be absolutely miserable; it is wrong to take from another the fruit of his labour", and others of the like kind, may not be laid down and used as axioms, the truth of which appears as irresistibly as many of those which are the foundation of Geometry. But the case is very different when we come to consider particular effects. What is meant by demonstrating morality, can

nor unequal, neither the same nor different, or that in such instances *equality* and *inequality*, *sameness* and *difference* run into one another? Just as unreasonable is it to conclude, from its being often difficult to define the bounds of right and wrong, or from its appearing doubtful to us in some nice cases, what way of acting is *right* or *wrong*, that in such cases, there is no particular and precise way of acting truly and certainly right or wrong, or that *right* and *wrong* in these cases lose their distinction, and run into one another. The weakness of our discerning faculties, and the obscurity attending our apprehensions, cannot in any case affect truth. Things themselves continue invariably the same, however different our opinions of them may be, or whatever doubts or difficulties may perplex us.

only be the reducing these under the general self-evident principles of morality, or making out with certainty their relation to them. It would be happy for us were this always possible. We should then be eased of many painful doubts, know universally and infallibly what we should do and avoid, and have nothing to attend to besides conforming our practice to our knowledge. How impracticable this is every one must see.— Were benevolence the only virtuous principle, we could by no means apply it always without any danger of mistake to action; because we cannot be more sure, a particular external action is an instance of beneficence, than we are of the tendencies and all the consequences of that action. The same holds true upon the supposition that self-love is the only principle of virtue. 'Till we can in every particular know what is good or bad for ourselves and others, and discover the powers and qualities of objects, and what will result from any application of them, we cannot always demonstrate what either of these principles requires, but must continue liable to frequent and unavoidable errors in our moral judgment and conduct.—In like manner, what our duty to God, the regard due to the properties and rights of others, and gratitude re-
quire,

quire, we must be at a loss about, as far as in any circumstances we cannot be sure what the will of God is, where property is lodged, or who our benefactors are, and what are our obligations to them.—— Thus, if we consider the several moral principles singly, or as liable to no limitations from one another, we find what uncertainty we must frequently be in, how it is best to act.

But if we further recollect, that in order to judge of a case, and what is right in it, we ought to extend our views to all the different *heads* and principles of virtue, to examine how far each is concerned, and compare their respective influence and demands; and that at the same time (as just now explained) they often interfere; a second source of insuperable difficulties will appear. It is not alone sufficient to satisfy us that an action is to be done, that we know it will be the means of good to others: We are also to consider how it affects ourselves, what it is in regard to justice, and all the other circumstances the case may involve, must be taken in, weighed and compared, if we would form a true judgment concerning it. In reality, before we can be capable of deducing demonstrably, accurately and particularly, the whole rule of *right* in every case and

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instance, we must possess universal and unerring knowledge. It must be above the power of any finite understanding to do this. He only who knows all truth, is acquainted with the whole law of truth in all its importance, perfection, and extent.

Oncemore; we may, by considerations of this kind, be helped in forming a judgment of the different sentiments and practices in several points of morality, which have obtained in different countries and ages. The foregoing general principles all men at all times have agreed in. It cannot be shewn that there have ever been any human creatures who have had no ideas of property and justice, of the rectitude of veracity, gratitude, benevolence, prudence, and religious worship. All the difference has been about particular usages and practices, of which it is impossible but different persons must have different ideas, according to the various opinions they entertain of their relation to the universally acknowledged moral principles, or of their ends, connexions, and tendencies. — Those who plead for passive obedience and non-resistance, consider that as required by divine command, by natural justice, or publick good; which others, with more reason, look upon as utterly inconsistent with all these, as repugnant

to the natural rights and equality of men, reproachful and dishonourable to human nature, and destructive of the very end of magistracy and government. — Those nations amongst whom the customs of exposing children, and leaving aged persons to perish with hunger and want, have prevailed, approved of these things upon the opinion of their being conducive to the general advantage and friendly to the sufferers themselves. — Self-murder amongst the antients was not generally held in that detestation in which it now is, but by many of them justified and applauded, because viewed as a method of extricating themselves from misery, which none but men of superior bravery could make use of ; and not as, what it truly is, an act of very criminal discontent and impatience ; a violation of our allegiance to God ; a desertion of the station assigned us by him, and cowardly flight from the duties and difficulties of life.— As far as any have ever approved persecution, it could only be under the notion of its being doing God service ; an execution of his wrath upon his enemies ; a just punishment of obstinate and impious men, and the necessary means of discountenancing pernicious errors, and preventing the propagation of what tends to subvert true religion, and ruin for ever the souls
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of men. — The most superstitious practices, and ridiculous rites of worship, have gained credit and support, merely because apprehended to be pleasing to God, means of procuring his favour, and proper expressions of homage and adoration.

In these, and innumerable other instances of the like kind, the practical errors of men have arisen plainly from their speculative errors; from their mistaking facts, or not seeing the whole of a case; whence it cannot but often happen, that they will think those things right, which, if they had juster opinions of facts and cases, they would unavoidably condemn. The rules of judging are universally the same. Those who approve, and those who disapprove, go upon the same principles. The disagreement is produced by the different application of them. The error lies in imagining that to fall under a particular species of virtue, which does not. And it is just as reasonable to expect disagreement and errors here, as in the application of the received principles of knowledge and assent in general. Nor would it be more extravagant to conclude, that men have not speculative reason, because of the diversity in their speculative opinions, than it is to conclude, they have no powers of moral

ral perception, or that there is no fixed standard of morality, and no certain principles and rules for judging of it, because of the diversity in men's opinions, concerning the fitness or unfitness, lawfulness or unlawfulness, of *particular practices*. Till men can be raised above defective knowledge, and secured against partial and inadequate views, they must continue liable to believe cases and things, and the tendencies of actions, to be otherwise than they are; and, consequently, to form false judgments concerning right and wrong. And, till the bulk of mankind can be secured from the most gross delusions, and taking up the wildest opinions, they must continue proportionably liable to the most grossly wrong judgments of this kind *.

* Men frequently discover a determination or prejudice, with respect to particular things, as right or wrong, which is not grounded on any particular reason; and some, possibly, may be led from hence to imagine, that there is room for doubting, whether any of the particular things we conceive right, are certainly and truly so. This deserves little notice, any farther than as it gives occasion to observe, that the very ideas *themselves* of right and wrong, if they represent any thing different from modes of sensation, prove, that some things there are necessarily and truly right and wrong; for, otherwise, we could not have had the ideas; what they represent would be non-entities and impossibilities. So was there nothing equal or unequal, we could not have had any ideas of equality and inequa-

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It should be also remembered, that it is not easy to determine how far our natural sentiments may be altered by custom, education, and example; or to say, what degree of undue attachment to some qualities, and vivacity to some ideas above others, they may give, or how much depravity and blindness they may introduce into our moral and intellectual powers. Notions the most stupid may, through their influence, come to be rooted in the mind beyond the possibility of being ever eradicated, antipathies given to objects naturally the most agreeable, and sensation itself perverted.

It would be unreasonable to conclude from hence, as some seem disposed to do, that all we are and think is derived from education and habit; that we can never tell, when we are free from their influence, and believe on just evidence; or that there are no natural sensations and desires at all, and no principles of

lity. As far as we have *ideas*, there are *things* necessarily real of which they are ideas. An idea which represents no kind of existence, to which there is no correspondent object or reality in truth, or the possibilities of things, is the idea of *nothing*, or no idea. Ideas derive themselves from things; or they suppose independent, necessary truth and intelligibles: That is, there exists a necessary mind, comprehending all things in itself, which is above all other minds, before all others, original to all others, and the light, object, and end of all others.

truth

truth in themselves certain and invariable, and forcing universal assent. — Education and habit can give us no new ideas. The power and influence they have, suppose somewhat natural as their foundation. Were it not for the natural powers by which we perceive pleasure and pain, good and evil, beauty and deformity, the ideas of them could never be excited in us, any more than the ideas of colour in persons born blind; and no prejudices could be communicated to us for or against particular things, under any notions of this kind. Were there no ideas of proportion, similitude, existence, identity, &c. natural and essential to our understandings, we should lose all capacity of knowledge and judgment, and there would be no possibility of being mis-led, or of being in any way influenced by wrong byasses? Neither, had we no natural ideas of virtue and vice, could we be capable of any approbation or disapprobation, any love or hatred of actions and characters, otherwise than as advantageous or disadvantageous to us. All that custom and education can do, is to alter the direction of natural sentiments and ideas, or to connect them with wrong or improper objects. — It is that part of our moral constitution which depends on instinct, that is chiefly
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liable to the corruption and depravation produced by these causes. The *sensible horror* at vice, and *affectionate attachment* to virtue, may be impaired, the conscience seared, the nature of particular practices mistaken, the sense of shame weakened, the judgment darkened, the voice of reason stifled, and self-deception practised, to the most lamentable and fatal degree. Yet the grand lines and primary principles of morality are so deeply wrought into our hearts, and one with our minds, that they will be for ever legible. The general approbation of certain virtues, and dislike of their contraries, must always remain, and cannot be erased but with the destruction of all reason and intellectual perception. The most depraved never sink so low, as to lose all moral discernment, all ideas of right and wrong, justice and injustice, honour and dishonour. This appears sufficiently from the judgments they pass on the actions of others, from the resentment they discover whenever they are themselves the objects of ill treatment, and from some inward uneasiness and remorse, which they are seldom quite free from, and by which, on some occasions, they cannot avoid being severely tormented. Whatever satisfaction and peace within themselves they enjoy, proceed, in a great measure, from

from a studied neglect of reflexion, and from their having learned to disguise their vices under the appearance of some virtuous or innocent qualities; which shews, that still vice is an object so foul and frightful to them, that they cannot bear the direct view of it in themselves, or entertain and indulge it in its naked form. But, after all, were these things otherwise than I have represented them, little regard would be due, in these enquiries, to what takes place amongst those we know to be the corrupt and perverted part of the species. These, certainly, cannot be the proper persons by whom to judge of truth, or from whom to take our estimate of human nature.

The sources of error and disagreement now insisted on, would produce very considerable effects, though all the particulars of duty and rectitude were, in themselves, plain and easy to be determined; for that ought to be very plain indeed, about which great differences would not be occasioned by educations, tempers, views, and degrees of sagacity, so different as those of men, and inattention, prejudices, and corruptions so great as those which prevail amongst them. — But, if we recollect the observations made concerning the interference of the principles of morality, and the impossi-

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impossibility of a complete and scientific deduction of what we ought to do and avoid, in all particular circumstances, we shall own, that the subject itself is involved in real darkness, and attended with insurmountable difficulties, which, therefore, must be a further ground of much greater and more lasting and unavoidable disagreements.

Upon the whole; what has been said seems sufficiently to account for the diversity of men's sentiments concerning moral matters; and it appears to be reasonable to expect, that, in the sense and manner I have explained, they should be no less various, than their sentiments concerning any other matters.

I shall only add, that though all men, in all cases and circumstances, judged rightly what is virtue and right behaviour, there would still prevail a very considerable variety in their moral practices in different ages and countries. The reason is obvious: In different ages and circumstances of the world, the same practices often have not the same connexions, tendencies, and effects. The state of human affairs is perpetually changing, and, in the same period of time, it is very different in different nations. Amidst this variety, and these changes, it is impossible that the subject-matter of virtue should

should continue precisely the same. New obligations must arise, and the proprieties of conduct must vary, as new connexions of things take place, and new customs, laws, and political constitutions are introduced. Many things, very warrantable and proper under one form of government, or in the first establishment of a community, or amongst people of a particular genius, and where particular regulations and opinions prevail, may be quite wrong in another state of things, or amongst people of other characters and customs. Amongst the antient *Spartans*, we are told, theft was countenanced. The little value they had of wealth, the sentiments they entertained of publick good, and many circumstances in the state of their affairs, might, in some measure, alter the objects and ideas of property, and render every instance of taking from another what he possessed, not the same that it is now among us. Some virtues or accomplishments may be more useful and more difficult, in some circumstances of countries and governments, than in others ; and this may give just occasion for their being more applauded. Other instances, more obvious and unexceptionable of what is now meant, may easily offer themselves

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to the reader ; and, in considering the diversity of sentiments amongst mankind concerning any particular practices, it will be right, amongst other things, not to overlook the difference in the real state of the case, which the differences of times and places make, and how far they alter the relation of the practices to the general principles of morality.

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C H A P. VIII.

Of the Nature and Essentials of Virtue in Practice, as distinguished from absolute Virtue ; and particularly, of the Intention accompanying the Practice of Virtue, or the Motive and Principle of Action in a virtuous Agent as such.

BEFORE we come to the discussion of what is to be the subject of this chapter, it is necessary a distinction on which what will be said in it is founded, and to which I have before had occasion to refer, should be distinctly explained: I mean, the distinction of virtue into what I chuse to call *abstract* or *absolute* virtue, and *practical* or *relative* virtue*.

It will, I think, plainly appear, that there is a just and proper ground for this distinction :

* A distinction much the same with this may be found in the letters between Dr. Sharp and Mrs. Cockburn. See Mrs. Cockburn's Works, Vol. ii.

And we cannot, without attending to it, have a sufficiently accurate view of the nature of virtue, or avoid a good deal of embarrassment and confusion in our enquiries into it.

Abstract virtue is, most properly, a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent ; or what, *in itself* and *absolutely*, it is right *such* an agent, in *such* circumstances, should do ; and what, if he judged truly, he would judge he ought to do. — *Practical* virtue, on the contrary, has a necessary relation to, and dependence upon, the sense and opinion of the agent concerning his actions. It signifies what, it is true, he ought to do, *upon supposition* of his having such and such sentiments of things. — In a sense, not entirely different from this, good actions have been by some divided into such as are *materially* good, and such as are *formally* so. — Moral agents are liable to mistake the circumstances they are in, and, consequently, to form erroneous judgments concerning their own obligations. This supposes, that these obligations have a real existence, independent of their judgments. But, when they are in any manner mistaken, it is not to be imagined, that then nothing remains obligatory ; for there is a sense in which it
may

may be said, that what any being, in the sincerity of his heart, *thinks* he ought to do, he *indeed* ought to do, and would be justly blameable if he omitted to do, though contradictory to what, in the former sense, is his duty. — It would be trifling to object to this, that it implies, that an action may, at the same time, be both right and wrong; for it implies this only, as the rightness and wrongness of actions are considered in different views and senses. A magistrate who should adjudge an estate to the person, whose right it *appears* to be, upon a great preponderation of evidence, would certainly do right in *one sense*; though should the opposite claimant, after all, prove to be the true proprietor, he would as certainly do wrong in *another sense*.

This distinction indeed cannot be rejected, without asserting, that whatever we *think* things to be, that, and nothing else, they *are*; that, we can, in *no sense*, ever do wrong, without incurring guilt and blame; that while we follow our judgments, we cannot *err* in our conduct; that though, through involuntary mistake, a man breaks the most important engagements, hurts his best friends, or bestows his bounty on the most worthless objects;

though, through religious zeal and a blind superstition, he commits the most shocking barbarities, imagining he hereby does God service, and, from an apprehension of their lawfulness, practises violence and deceit; there is yet no sense in which he contradicts rectitude, or in which it can be truly affirmed he acts amiss, or inconsistently with the relations in which he stands. Thus the difference between an enlightened and an erroneous conscience would vanish entirely; no mistake of right would be possible; all the fancies of men, concerning their duty, would be alike just, and the most ignorant as well acquainted with the subject-matter of virtue, as the most knowing and wise. — But to what purpose is it to multiply words on this occasion, when it is so apparent, that all enquiries after our duty, all instructions in it, all deliberations how it becomes us to act in the various circumstances into which we are cast, and the very expressions, *doing right*, and *perceiving right*, imply *objective rectitude*, or something separate from, and independent of the mind, and its perceptions, to be enquired after, known, and perceived?

It may be worth our notice here, that from knowing the nature and capacities of a being,
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his relations, connexions, and dependencies, and the consequences of his actions; the whole of what he ought to do, in the first sense, may be determined, without once attending to his private judgment of things.

But, in order to determine this in the latter sense, the single thing necessary to be considered is this judgment, or the real apprehensions of the being concerning what he does, at the time of doing it. — The former requires the greatest variety of things to be taken into consideration, and is no more possible to be by us universally and unerringly determined, than the whole truth on any other subject. The latter, on the contrary, has few difficulties attending it. The greatest degree of doubt about the former, may leave us in no suspense about this. Our rule is to follow our consciences steadily and faithfully, after we have taken care to inform them in the best manner we can; and, where we doubt, to take the *safest* side, and not to venture to *do* any thing, concerning which we have doubts, when we know there can be nothing amiss in *omitting* it; and, on the contrary, not to *omit* any thing about which we doubt, when we know there can be no harm in *doing* it. But, if we

doubt whether the performance, and also whether the omission is right; in these circumstances, when the doubts on both sides are equal, and we cannot get better information, it becomes practically indifferent which way we act. When there is any sensible preponderancy, it is evident, we ought to take that way, in which there seems to us the least danger of going astray. — 'Tis happy for us, that our title to the character of virtuous beings depends, not upon the justness of our opinions, or the constant, *objective* rectitude of all we do; but upon the conformity of our actions to the sincere conviction and sense of our minds. A suspicion of the contrary, were it to prevail, would prove of very bad consequence, by causing us to distrust our only guide, and throwing us into a state of endless and inextricable perplexity and anxiety. In this state it would be no relief to us, to resolve upon total inaction, as not knowing but that, when acting with the most upright views, we may be the most blame-worthy; for such a resolution might itself prove the greatest crime, and fix upon us the greatest guilt.

I have applied the epithets *real* and *absolute* to the first kind of virtue, for an obvious reason;

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son; but care should be taken not to imagine, that the latter is not also, in a different sense and view, *real* virtue. It is truly and absolutely right, that a being should do what the reason of his mind, though perhaps unhappily misinformed, requires of him; or what, according to his best judgment, he is persuaded to be the will of God. If he neglects this, he becomes necessarily and justly the object of his own dislike, and forfeits all pretensions to virtue and integrity *.

* How absurd then are all claims to dominion over conscience? Such a dominion is little to the purpose of those who have pleaded for it, if it does not mean a power or right to oblige persons to act against their private judgment, that is, a *right* to oblige persons to *do wrong*. Every man ought to be left to follow his conscience, because then only he acts virtuously. Where the plea of conscience is *real*, (and who but the searcher of hearts can judge how far in general it is or is not so?) 'tis wicked to lay restraints upon it. For it is violating the rights of what is above all things sacred, attempting to make hypocrites and knaves of men, and establishing human authority on the ruins of divine. — All that can ever be right, is necessary *self-defence*, when the consciences of men lead them to hurt others, to take away their liberty, or to subvert the publick — It is indeed no less a *contradiction to common sense*, than it is *impiety*, for any to pretend to a power to oblige their fellow-men to worship and serve God in any manner different from that which is most agreeable to their consciences; that is, in any way but that in which alone it is acceptable and right *for them* to do it. — The civil magistrate goes out of his province, when he interposes in religious differences. His office is only to secure

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These different kinds of rectitude have such an affinity and connexion, that we are very prone to confound them in our thoughts and discourses; and a particular attention is necessary, in order to know when we speak of the one or the other. 'Tis hardly possible in writing on morality, to avoid blending them in our language, and frequently including both, even in the same sentence. But a careful and ingenuous person may see when, and how this

the liberties and properties of those under his jurisdiction; to protect all good subjects; to preserve the peace amongst the different parties, and to hinder them from encroaching on one another..

I hope I shall be excused, if I take this opportunity to add, that we have not much less than demonstration, that God will not and cannot grant, to any particular men or set of men, a power to direct the faith and practices of others in religious matters, without making them, at the same time, *infallible* and *impeccable*. For what, otherwise, must such a grant issue in? What would it be, besides a grant of power to mislead and deceive? What errors, what corruptions, what desolation do we know have been actually produced by the pretence to it without these qualifications? — 'Tis a part of the peculiar happiness of this nation, and, I hope, a good omen to it, that principles of this kind have been so well explained, and are now so much received in it. May they be still more received, and better understood; and our constitution and laws, already the best in the world, grow to a perfect conformity to them. May the number of those who are for giving up their liberty and independency, and submitting to human authority in religious matters, be continually decreasing; and the joyful time soon come, when all slavish principles shall be universally contemned and detested.

is done, and generally, if not always, distinguish and separate them. — What is past of this work, has related chiefly to the former. It would be too tedious minutely to observe, how far the other has been concerned, or to point out those parts of what has been said, which are most properly applicable to it. Enough, it is presumed, has been here said, to enable any one to judge of this for himself, as well as to prepare the way for that to which we are now to proceed; namely, explaining particularly the nature, requisites, and essentials of *practical virtue*.

What first of all offers itself here, is, that practical virtue supposes *Liberty*. — Whether all will acknowledge this or not, it cannot be omitted.

The true idea of *liberty* is the same with that of *acting* and *determining*: And it is self-evident, that where all active powers are wanting, there can be no moral capacities. A being who cannot *act* at all, most certainly cannot act well or ill, virtuously or viciously. Now, as far as it is true of a being that *he acts*, so far he must *himself* be the cause of the action, and therefore not necessarily determined to act. Let any one try to put a sense on the expressions;

fions; *I will; I act*; which is consistent with supposing, that the volition or action proceeds, not from myself, but from somewhat else. Virtue supposes determination, and determination supposes a determiner; and a determiner that determines not himself, is a palpable contradiction. Determination requires an efficient cause. If this cause is the being himself, I plead for no more. If not, then it is no longer *his* determination; that is, *he* is no longer the determiner, but the motive, or whatever else any one will please to assign as the cause of the determination. To ask, what effects *our* determinations, is the very same with asking, who did a thing, after being informed that such a one did it. In short; who must not *feel* the absurdity of saying, *my* volitions are produced by a *foreign* cause, that is, are not *mine*; I determine *voluntarily*, and yet *necessarily*? — We have, in truth, the same constant, necessary consciousness of liberty, that we have that we think, chuse, will, or even exist; and whatever to the contrary men may say, 'tis impossible for them in earnest to think they have no active, self-moving powers, and are not the causes of *their own* volitions, or not to ascribe to *themselves*, what they must be conscious *they* think and do.

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But not to enter much further into a question, which has been so strangely darkened by fallacious reasonings, and where men are so apt to fall into a confusion of ideas; I would only observe, that it is hard to say, what virtue and vice, commendation and blame, mean, if they do not suppose *agency*, voluntary motion, free choice, and an absolute dominion over our resolutions *. — It has always been the *general*, and it is evidently the *natural* sense of mankind, that they cannot be accountable for what they have no power to avoid doing or forbearing. Nothing can be more glaringly absurd, than applauding or reproaching ourselves for what we were no more the causes of, than our own beings, and what it was no more possible for us to prevent, than the returns of the seasons, or the revolutions of the planets. The whole language of men, all their practical sentiments and schemes, and the whole frame and order of human affairs, are founded upon the notion of liberty, and are utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that nothing is made to depend on ourselves, or that our purposes and determina-

* *Motus enim voluntarius eam naturam in seipso continet, ut sit in nostra potestate, nobisque pareat.* Cic. de fato.

tions are not subjected to our own command, but all the result of an invincible, natural necessity †.

If, upon strict examination, any should find, as probably several may, that what they mean by necessity, is not inconsistent with the ideas of *agency* and *self-determination*, there will be little occasion for further disputes with them; and that liberty, which I insist upon as essential to morality, will be acknowledged; nor

† The ingenious author of the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, grants, that morality in general, all praise and blame, merit and accountableness, and moral obligation, suppose liberty. (See the *Adversifement*, and the *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*.) He grants too, that we have a feeling of liberty; that the divine plan required that we should be so made, as to seem to ourselves free; that the whole constitution of things is as if we were free; and that being under a necessity of approving and disapproving actions and characters, we are so far under a necessity of believing ourselves and others free. All this he owns, and yet (which is very strange) he denies the reality of liberty. He has conquered the necessity we are under, proved feeling itself (according to him, the source of the most important of our ideas and sentiments) to be, in this instance, deceitful; discovered the secret, which, by his account, was intended to be concealed from us, and laid open the scheme formed to deceive us. — But if, as this author asserts, morality implies liberty, and liberty there neither is, nor can be; it follows, surely, that there neither is, nor can be morality, nor consequently religion; and that the subjects of his *Essays* are, *the principles of what has no existence, of an impossibility*.

will

will it be at all necessary to take into consideration, or to pay much regard to any difficulties relating * to the nature of that influence we commonly ascribe to motives.

Secondly, Intelligence is another requisite of practical morality. Some degree of this is necessary to the perception of moral good and evil; and without this perception, or some moral ideas, there can be no moral agency. It must not be imagined, that liberty comprehends or infers intelligence; for all the inferior orders of beings possess true liberty. Self-

* With respect to this, however, one may observe, that there seems to be very little mysterious in a man's chusing to follow his judgment and desires, or in his actually doing what he is inclined to do; which is what we mean when we say, motives determine him: Though, at the same time, it be very plain, that motives can have no concern in effecting his determination, or that there is no *physical connexion* between his judgment and views, and the actions consequent upon them. What would be more absurd than to say, that our inclinations act upon us, or compel us; that our desires and fears put us into motion, or produce our volitions; that is, are *agents*? And yet, what is more conceivable or reasonable, than that they may be the *accounts* or *occasions* of our putting ourselves into motion? — That there is an essential and total difference between the ideas of an *efficient cause* and an *account* or *occasion*, it would be trifling to go about to prove. What sense would be there in saying, that the *situation* of a body, which may properly be the occasion or account of its being struck by another body, is the *efficient* of its motion or its *impeller*?

motion

motion and activity, of some kind, are essential to every conscious, living being. There seems no difference between wanting all spontaneity, and being quite inanimate. — But though liberty does not suppose intelligence, yet intelligence plainly supposes liberty. For what has been now affirmed of all sensitive natures, is much more unexceptionably true of intelligent natures. A thinking, designing, reasoning being, without liberty, without any inward, spontaneous, active, self-directive principle, is what no one can frame any idea of. So unreasonable are all objections to the making of free creatures; and so absurd to ask, why men were made so. But,

Thirdly, The main point now to be insisted on is, “that an agent cannot be justly denominated *virtuous*, except he acts from a consciousness of rectitude, and with a regard to it as his rule and end.” Though this observation appears to me undoubtedly true, and of the greatest importance on this subject; yet I know there are many, whose assent to it will not be easily gained; and, therefore, it will be proper that I should endeavour particularly to explain and prove it.

Liberty and Reason constitute the capacity of virtue. What I have now said, is what gives it

it actual being in a character. — The reader must not here forget the distinction before explained. To mere Theoretical virtue, or (if I may so speak) the abstract reasons and fitnesses of things, praise-worthiness is not applicable. 'Tis the actual conformity of the wills of moral agents to what they see or believe to be these, that is the object of our praise and esteem. One of these may, perhaps, very properly be called the *virtue of the action*, in contradistinction from the other, which may be called the *virtue of the agent*. To the former, no particular intention is requisite; for what is *objectively* right, may be done from any motive good or bad; and, therefore, from hence alone, no merit is communicated to the agent; nay, it is consistent with the greatest guilt. On the contrary, to the other the particular intention is what is most essential. When this is good, there is so far virtue, whatever is true of the *matter* of the action; for an agent, who does what is *objectively* wrong, may often be entitled to commendation.

It may possibly be of some advantage towards elucidating this matter, to conceive that only as, in strict propriety, *done* by a moral agent, which he *intends* to do. What arises beyond, or contrary to his intention, how-

ever it may eventually happen, or be derived, by the connexion of natural causes, from his determination, should not be imputed to him. Our own determinations alone are, most properly, our actions. These alone we have absolute power over, and are immediately and truly the causes of, and responsible for. 'Tis, at least, worth considering, in what different senses and manner we are said to do what we did, and what we did not design to do. There is a great and obvious difference between these two things, and the causality or efficiency implied in these cases, is far from being the same. — There seems indeed scarcely any thing more evident, than that there are two views or senses, in which we commonly consider and speak of actions. Sometimes we mean by them, the determinations or volitions themselves of a being, of which the intention is an essential part: And sometimes we mean the real event, or external effect produced. With respect to a being possessed of infinite knowledge and power, these are always and absolutely coincident. What such a being designs and determines to do, is always the same with the actual event produced. But we have no reason to think this is true of any inferior beings.

In

In further explaining and proving the point I have now in view, it will be proper to shew, " that the perception of right and wrong does excite to action, and is alone a sufficient principle of action ; " after which we shall be better prepared for judging, " how far, " without it, there can be *practical virtue*."

Experience, and the reason of the thing, will, if we attentively consult them, soon satisfy us about the first of these. All men continually feel, that the perception of right and wrong excites to action; and it is so much their natural and unavoidable sense, that this is true, that there are few, or none, who, upon having it first proposed to them, would not wonder at its being questioned. There are many supposable cases and circumstances, in which it is impossible to assign any other reason of action. Why would we, all circumstances on both sides being the same, help a *benefactor* rather than a *stranger*; or, one to whom we had given promises, and made professions of kindness, rather than one whom we were under no engagements to? Why would any good being chuse such methods to accomplish his end as were consistent with, *faithfulness* and *veracity*, rather than such as implied *deceit* and *falsehood*;

hood; though he knew the latter to be equally safe, or, in a great degree, even more safe, more easy and expeditious?—Is it only, for our own sakes, or out of a view to publick utility, that we obey and honour the Deity? — How are we to account for a man's refraining from secret fraud or impurity, or his practising truth, sincerity, equity, justice, and honour, in many particular instances of their interfering, or seeming to interfere, with private and publick good, as well as with his strongest natural desires? — Let any one, for example, try what reasons he can find from benevolence or self-interest, why an honest man, though in want, *though sure of being never suspected*, would not secure a good estate, ease and plenty to himself, and relief and aid to his neighbours, by secreting or interpolating a will, by which it of right devolved on a worthless person, already sufficiently provided for, and who, in all likelihood, would make use of it only to make himself and others miserable? What could influence, in such and many other like circumstances, besides a *sense of duty and honesty*? Or what other universal motive can there be to the practice of justice?

But further, it seems extremely evident,
that

that excitement belongs to the very ideas of moral right and wrong, and is essentially inseparable from the apprehension of them. What in a former chapter has been said of obligation, is enough to shew this. — When we are conscious that a thing is *fit* to be done, or that it *ought* to be done, it is not conceivable that we can remain *uninfluenced*, or want a *motive* to action*. It would be to little purpose to argue much with a person, who would deny this; or who would maintain, that the *becomingness* or *reasonableness* of an action is no reason for doing it; and the *immorality* or *unreasonableness* of an action, no reason against doing it. An affection or inclination to rectitude cannot be separated from the view of it, any more than from the view of private pleasure, an affection or inclination to private pleasure can be separated†. The knowledge

* *Optimi quique permulta, ob eam unam causam, faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honestum est. Cic. de finibus. Lib. ii.*

† Those who own, that an action may not be less right, though certain to produce no over-balance of private pleasure; and yet assert, that nothing, but the prospect of this to be obtained, can influence the will, must also maintain, that the mere rightness of an action, or the consideration that it is fit to be done, apart from the con-

of what is right, without any approbation of it, or concern to practise it, is not conceivable or possible. And this knowledge will certainly be attended with *correspondent, actual practice*, whenever there is nothing to oppose it. Why a *reasonable* being acts *reasonably*; why he has a disposition to follow reason, and is not without aversion to wrong; why he chuses to do what he knows he *should* do, and cannot be wholly indifferent, whether he abstains from that which he knows is evil and criminal, and *not to be done*, are questions which need not, and which deserve not to be answered.

Instincts, therefore, as before observed in other instances, are not necessary to the choice of ends. The intellectual nature is its own

consideration of the pleasure attending or following it; would leave us quite uninclined, and indifferent to the performance or omission of it. This is so inconceivable, that those whose principles oblige them to admit it, cannot, one would think, really mean by right and wrong, the same with the rest of mankind. That, supposing virtue to denote any thing distinct from pleasure, and independent of it, it is possible to *conceive*, that a virtuous action may not produce an overbalance of private pleasure; or, which answers the purpose as well, that an agent may *believe* this of an action to be done by him, which yet he does not the less consider as virtuous, it would be trifling to say any thing to prove: But this it is necessary those, whose opinion I have now in view, should deny.

law.

law. It has, within itself, a spring and guide of action, which it cannot suppress or reject. Rectitude is itself an end, an ultimate end, an end superior to all other ends, governing, directing and limiting them, and whose existence and influence depend on nothing arbitrary. It presides over all. Every appetite and faculty, every instinct and will, and all nature are subjected to it. To act *from affection to it*, is to act with light, and conviction, and knowledge. But acting from instinct, is so far acting in the dark, and following a blind guide. Instinct *drives* and *precipitates*; but reason *commands*. The impulses of *instinct* we may resist, without doing any violence to ourselves. Our highest merit and perfection often consist in this. The dictates of *reason* we can, *in no instance*, contradict, without a sense of shame, and giving our beings a wound in their most essential and sensible part. The experience we have of the operations of the former, is an argument of our imperfection, and meanness, and low rank. The other prevails most in the higher ranks of beings. 'Tis the chief glory of God, that he is removed infinitely from the possibility of any other principle of action.

It being therefore apparent that the determination of our minds concerning the nature of actions as morally good or bad, suggests a motive to do or avoid them ; it being also plain that this determination or judgment, tho' often not the prevailing, yet is always the first, the proper, and most natural and intimate spring and guide of the actions of reasonable beings : Let us now enquire, whether it be not further the *only* spring of action in a reasonable being, as far as he can be deemed morally good and worthy ; whether it be not the *only* principle from which all actions flow which engage our approbation and esteem of the agents ; or in other words, whether virtue be not itself the end of a virtuous agent as such.

If we suppose what has been said concerning the different senses of *doing* things to be just, and conceive that alone as most properly *done* by an agent, which he designs to do, and that what was no way an object of his design is not strictly imputable to him, or at least cannot give him any claim to merit or praise, it will follow that he cannot be properly said to practise virtue who does not *design* to practise it, to whom it is no object of regard, or who has it not at all in his view. It seems indeed as evident as we can wish any thing to be, that an

an action which is under no influence or direction from a *moral judgment*, cannot be in the practical sense *moral*; that when virtue is not pursued or intended, there is no virtue in the agent. Morally good intention without any intention or idea of moral good, is a contradiction. To act virtuously is to obey or follow reason: But can this be done without knowing and designing it?

I know, indeed, that according to the account some have given of virtue, it presupposes an intention in the agent different from that to itself, as denoting only the emotion arising in us upon observing actions flowing from certain motives and affections, and, in the original constitution of our natures, applicable alike to actions flowing from *any* motives. Were this account true, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that a sense of virtue and duty, or any regard to moral good, can ever influence to action. But this consequence cannot be regarded by one who believes not the opinion which implies it; nor is it with me a small objection to this opinion, that such a consequence arises from it.

If a person can justly be styled *virtuous* and *praise worthy*, when he never reflects upon virtue, and the reason of his acting is not taken from

from any consideration of it, intelligence certainly is not necessary to moral agency, and brutes are full as capable of virtue and moral merit as we are.— Besides, might not a person with equal reason be reckoned *publick spirited*, who without any view to publick good, should accidentally make a discovery that enriches his country? May not that course of behaviour be as well styled *ambitious*, to which the love of honour and power did not excite; or that *selfish*, which did not aim at private interest; or that *friendly*, which was attended with no friendly intention *?

I have the pleasure to find the Author of the *Characteristicks* agreeing with me in these sentiments. “ In this case alone, says he, it is we
 “ call any creature worthy or virtuous, when
 “ it can have the notion of a publick interest,
 “ and can attain to the speculation or sense of
 “ what is morally good or ill, admirable or
 “ blameable, right or wrong. For though we

* Εστὶ γὰρ αὕτη ἡ ^ἡεὐπρεξία τελειότης, *Arist. Ethic.* Lib. vi. Chap. v. — αἰδὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις καλοὶ, καὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐνεκά. --- ὁ δὲ διδῶς οἷς μὴ δεῖ, ἢ μὴ τὰ καλὰ ἐνεκά, ἀλλὰ διὰ τινὰ ἄλλην αἰτίαν, οὐκ ἐλευθερεῖται, ἀλλὰ ἀλλοῦ τις ρηθῆσεται. *Ibid* Lib. iv. Chap. i. And to the same purpose in many other places.

“ may vulgarly call an ill horse vicious, yet we
 “ never say of a good one nor of any mere idiot
 “ or changeling, though ever so good-natured,
 “ that he is worthy or virtuous. So that if
 “ a creature be generous, kind, constant, and
 “ compassionate, yet if he cannot reflect on
 “ what he himself does or sees others do so
 “ as to take notice of what is worthy and ho-
 “ nest, and make that notice or conception of
 “ worth and honesty to be an object of his
 “ affection, he has not the character of being
 “ virtuous; for thus and no otherwise he is
 “ capable of having a sense of right or wrong.
 “ &c.” See the *Enquiry*, part II. sect. III. And
 elsewhere he observes that, “ if that which
 “ restrains a person and holds him to a virtu-
 “ ous-like behaviour be no affection towards
 “ virtue or goodness itself, but towards private
 “ good merely, he is not in reality the more
 “ virtuous. Ib. sect. IV” †.

† “ Others may pursue different forms and fix their eyes
 “ on different species, as all men do on one or other; the
 “ real honest man, however plain he appears, has that
 “ highest species, honesty itself in view. *Charact.* Vol. III.
 page 34. See also page 66. “ But as soon as he comes
 “ to have affection towards what is morally good, and can
 “ like or affect such good for its own sake, as good and
 “ amiable in itself, then is he in some degree good and
 “ virtuous, and not till then.” — This truly noble author

But

But it may be asked, “is not *Benevolence* a virtuous principle? And do we not approve all actions proceeding from it?”— I answer, Benevolence, it has been shewn, is of two kinds, *rational* and *instinctive*. *Rational benevolence* entirely coincides with rectitude, and the actions proceeding from it, with the actions proceeding from a regard to rectitude. And the same is to be said of all those affections and desires, which would arise in a nature as intelligent. It is not possible that endeavours to obtain an end which as reasonable, we cannot but love and chuse, should not be by reason approved; or that what is *necessarily* de-

has no-where expressed clearly and distinctly his sentiments concerning the original of our ideas of virtue; but from some expressions he has used, it seems probable that he was for a surer and deeper foundation of morals, than either arbitrary will or implanted senses. See Vol. II. page 36, 43, 49, 50, 53, 257. — Vol. III. page 33. — His account of virtue in his *Enquiry*, is, indeed, on several accounts extremely deficient, particularly on account of his limiting virtue so much as in general he seems to do, to the cultivation of natural affection and benevolence; and overlooking entirely, as Dr. Butler observes, the *authority* belonging to virtue and the principle of reflexion. Yet he has, I think, said many excellent things on virtue and providence, on life and manners; nor can it be enough lamented, that his prejudices against Christianity have contributed so much towards defeating the good effects of them, and staining his works.

freable

agreeable to all beings, should not be also necessarily right to be pursued.

But *instinctive benevolence* is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As far as this influences, so far something else than reason and goodness influence, and so much I think is to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or character. This is very agreeable to the common sentiments and determinations of men. Where-ever the influence of mere natural temper or inclination appears, and a particular conduct is known to proceed from hence, we may, it is true, love the person as we commonly do the inferior creatures when they discover mildness and tractableness of disposition; but no regard to him as a *virtuous agent* will arise within us. A soft and silly man, let him be ever so complying, liberal, and good-tempered, never stands high in the esteem of men; because we always apprehend him to be what he is, not so much from any influence of reason and moral good, as from a happy instinct and bent of nature born with him: And, in the same manner, the tenderness and labours of parents for their off-spring, a fond mother's exposing her life to save her child, and all actions proceeding from the nearer attachments

of

of nature appear to have as much less moral value, as they are derived more from natural instinct, and less attended with reflexion on their reasonableness and fitness. As long as this reflexion is wanting, it is in a moral account indifferent, whether the action proceeds from kind affection or any other affection.— But it must not be forgot, that such reflexion will in general, accompany generous, friendly, benevolent actions, and cannot but have some concern in producing them. Approbation is inseparable from the view of them, and some ideas of right and wrong are present always with all men, and must more or less influence almost all they do. We have an unavoidable consciousness of *rectitude* in relieving misery, in promoting happiness, and in every office of love and good-will to others. It is this consecrates kindness and humanity, and exalts them into virtues.

Actions proceeding from universal, calm, dispassionate benevolence, are by all esteemed more virtuous and amiable than actions producing equal or greater moments of good, directed to those to whom nature has more particularly linked us, and arising from kind determinations in our minds which are more

confined and urgent. The reason, surely is, that in the former case the operations of instinct have less effect, and are less sensible, and the attention to what is morally good and right is more explicit and prevalent. Were we prompted to the acts of universal benevolence in the same manner that parents are to the care of their children, we should not conceive of them as more virtuous. These things cannot be explained consistently with the notion, that virtue consists in acting from kind affections which have no connexion with, and cannot be derived from intelligence, and are incapable, in their immediate exercise, of being attended with any influence from it. For why then should not the virtue be greatest where the kind impulse is strongest? Why should it on the contrary, in such a case, be least of all; and entirely vanish, when all use of reason is precluded, and nothing but the force of instinct appears? Why, in particular, should resisting our strongest instincts and following steadily in contradiction to them *, the determinations of cool unbiassed reason, be considered as the very highest virtue? Probably, those who

* More to this purpose has been said by Mr. Balguy in his *Treat*, on the *Foundation of moral goodness*.

plead for this opinion would give it up, and acknowledge what is now asserted, could they be convinced that benevolence is essential to intelligence, and not merely an implanted principle or instinct.

All these observations may very justly be applied to self-love. *Reasonable and calm* self-love, as well as the *love of mankind*, is entirely a virtuous principle. They are both parts of the idea of virtue. Where this is greatest, there will be the most ardent and active benevolence, and likewise the greatest degree of true prudence, the highest concern about bettering ourselves to the utmost, and the most effectual and constant pursuit of private happiness and perfection, in opposition to whatever hindrances and temptations to neglect them may be thrown in our way.

Our natural desires carrying us to private good are very strong, and the pursuit of it is more likely to arise from these desires without any rational reflexion, or interposition of moral judgment, than the pursuit of publick good; which is one reason why it is less considered as virtue. Avoiding a *present* danger or securing a *present* good to ourselves, is not often looked upon as in any degree virtuous: but the same cannot be said of endeavouring to prevent a
future

future danger, or to secure a *future* good : The reason of which is, that we are drawn towards what is *present* with a greater degree of instinctive desire *. It makes more sensible impressions upon us, and strikes our minds more

* This is a very wise and necessary disposition of our natures. Had we the same sensible determination to distant good that we have to *present*, how distracted should we be in our pursuits? How regardless of what is present, how impatient, how miserable, would it render us? — The consequence on the other hand of this greater propensity given us to present than future good, it was easy to foresee, would prove, that men would be in great danger of chusing and resting in the one to the neglect of the other. This inconvenience, however (which it is the business of reason and a principal part of virtue to prevent) is far from being equal to the contrary inconveniencies which would have attended a different disposition of our natures. — It may seem upon a general reflexion very strange, that persons, when acting solely from a regard to private good, should be capable of knowingly chusing a less rather than a greater, a present rather than a future much more important good. If we were at these times determined by nothing but the simple and calm view of good as such, this fact would indeed be entirely unaccountable. But when we consider, that this is not the case, and attend to the observation now made, that we have a stronger instinctive determination to present than to future good, the difficulty in a great measure vanishes. The fact I have mentioned will not be more unaccountable than a man's following his passions and instincts in any other instances, in opposition to his own happiness, and all the reasons that can be proposed to him.—In other words; we have a *particular tendency or appetite to present good*, from whence it happens, that good is far from always affecting and influencing us, in propor-

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forcibly.

forcibly. Yet, in some circumstances of opposition from particular passions and competition between different pleasures, acting from a regard even to *present* good may be really virtuous. And always the more remote a good is, and the more temptations we have to forego our own interest, the greater is our virtue in maintaining a proper regard and attention to them. In these cases, reason is necessarily more called forth to interpose and decide; our passions less concur with its dictates; and our determinations are more derived from its authority and influence. Some kinds of future good there are, the pursuit of which always proves virtue. Others are so agreeable to the lower parts of our natures, and so connected with strong instinctive desires and propensions within us, that actions produced by the view of them can argue little or no virtue, tho' reason should in general approve the choice of them. But when reason condemns any particular gratifications; when pleasures of a baser nature stand in competition with those of

tion to the apprehended degree of its absolute worth. The view of *present good*, therefore, getting the better of the calm and dispassionate views of our *greatest interest upon the whole*, is only one instance of what happens continually among men, namely, "blind desire, unintelligent inclination" or brute impulse, getting the better of motives and considerations, known by the mind to be of incomparably "greater weight."

a higher

a higher nature ; or when upon any account pleasures in themselves innocent are proper to be resigned ; in these cases, guilt and blame become the consequences of pursuing them.

From these things we may see plainly, why and how far, hope and fear are, or are not, virtuous principles ; why, for instance, though doing a thing to escape an ignominious death, or obtain a profitable place, be not virtue, yet it is virtue, in many instances, to refrain from gratifications which we know are hurtful to us, or to quit a course of debauchery and extravagance to which passion and habit strongly urge us, from an apprehension of their bad effects on our healths and fortunes.

These observations (to which might be added many more of the same kind) are all very evident proofs of the truth of the conclusion I would establish ; namely, “ that the virtue of
“ an agent is always less in proportion to the
“ degree in which natural temper and propensities fall in with his actions, instinctive, un-
“ intelligent principles operate, and rational
“ reflexion on what is good and right to be
“ done, is wanting”.

It is further worth our particular notice, that the observations which have been now made on self-love, and the actions flowing from

it, shew us plainly how far a conduct founded in religious principles, and influenced by the consideration of another state, and the rewards and punishment to follow virtue and vice in it, can be justly represented as destitute of all moral goodness. It is indeed surprising, that extending our care to the whole of our existence, acting with a view to the final welfare and perfection of our natures, planting in them the seeds of future bliss, clearing our minds from all disorders and elevating them above every thing mortal and earthly out of a regard to a blessed immortality; it is, I say, surprising, that such conduct should have been ever in any degree depreciated as servile and mercenary. If any thing gives dignity of character, and raises one man above another, this does. If any thing is virtue, this is. Especially, as the very reward and happiness expected are themselves virtue; the highest degrees of moral improvement; a near resemblance to God; opportunities for the most extensive beneficence, and admission into a state into which nothing that defileth can enter, and the love and hope of which imply the love of goodness. — In a word, if in all cases, a reasonable and steady pursuit of private happiness amidst temptations to forego it from passion and present gratifications,

tions, be virtuous ; how easy is it to determine what opinion we ought to entertain of the pursuit of such a happiness as good men are taught to expect, seated in another world ?

Let me add, on this occasion, that acting out of a respect to future rewards, is not only, as now observed, itself virtue, but that also the firm belief of them is in the greatest degree advantageous to virtue, as it raises our ideas of its dignity by shewing us the Deity engaged in its favour, and as it takes off every obstacle to the practice of it arising from self-love, sets us at liberty to follow the good inclinations of our hearts, gives all good affections within us room to display and exert themselves, nay engages us, by an additional motive of the greatest weight, to cultivate them as much as possible, and thus, by occasioning a course of external actions flowing from them, gradually strengthens and exalts them, and fixes, confirms, and cherishes the habit and love of virtue in the mind.

But to return to the main purpose of this chapter. What has been said of virtuous actions may easily be applied to vicious actions. These can be no farther *in the agent* vicious, than as he knew or might have known them to be so. The wrong can be no farther charge-

able upon *him*, than he *saw* it, and acted in opposition to his *sense* of it. Or, to speak agreeably to a foregoing observation, and perhaps more properly, the *viciousness* in an action is no farther the agent's, than the *vicious* action is his ; and no more of the vicious action is his, than was included in his intention, or made a part of his immediate volition and determination.

When it appears, that a person had no suspicion of wrong in an action performed by him, and that he would certainly not have done it, had he entertained such a suspicion, nothing can be more unjust than to charge him, in this particular, with guilt and ill-desert. His being thus unsuspicious, it is true, may be the effect of criminal error and carelessness ; but then in *these* lies the guilt, and not in the consequent actions themselves which are performed with the apprehension that they are innocent. Every single action of a being has in it some precise and fixed degree of guilt, innocence or virtue, which is entirely determined by his perceptions, sense, views, and state of mind at the time of doing it, and cannot be rendered greater or less by what went before it, or what comes after it. What has been once true of an event must always remain true of it. What is at the
time

time of performance, the real determinate character of an action, in respect of commendableness or blameableness, must for ever remain its character without increase or diminution.—The pernicious consequences arising from an action aggravate its guilt, only so far as the agent when he did it, foresaw or suspected them, or had some consciousness that he ought to have taken greater care, and considered better what might prove the effects of what he did. A series of evil actions may also be the occasion of other evil actions, which when only *materially* evil, may indeed often be a very severe punishment of former wickedness, but cannot increase the agent's guilt, or subject to further punishment. This can be the consequence only, when such actions are themselves criminal, or instances of the violation of conscience and repetitions of former wickedness. If we are to lay it down for true, that one faulty step may taint all the actions it may unhappily have been the introduction to, whatever our *present* sense of them may be ; or, that consequences arising from actions which we did not foresee, render them criminal ; how deplorable is our condition ? For who can ever know all the effects that will result from his actions ? or be sure in many instances, when

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acting

acting upon particular opinions and sentiments, that throughout the whole progress of his thoughts in forming them, he was under no influence from any undue byass, or entirely fair and guiltless * ?

Let it not be imagined that what has been now asserted, has a tendency to render men careless and negligent in their enquiries. Tho' a crazy or drunken man may not be immediately blameable in doing many things in themselves very evil, yet for a man to put himself into a state in which he knows he shall be liable to commit such things, is extremely wicked. The difference is not great, between doing what we foresee will occasion us to do an evil blindly and unknowingly, and doing the evil deliberately and with the full use of reason. The guilt in such a case is much the same: it is

* It might have been further worth remarking here, that true opinions are often the effects of guilt as well as false ones, and that when they are so, they are no less culpable, and must have the same effects on the imputable nature of the actions occasioned by them.—This, by the way, should be more considered by us, when we justify our censures of others for their errors, by saying, they proceed from criminal dispositions and prejudices. For we ourselves, however right our opinions may be, are equally blameable on their account, as far as they are owing to the like criminal dispositions, or proceed from pride, implicitness, haste, negligence, or any other wrong causes.

chiefly

chiefly the time and manner of contracting it are different.

What has been last said shews us, how inexcusable all voluntary ignorance is, and of how great importance it is, that we avoid all unfairness in forming our sentiments. No upright person can be indifferent about this. We have not indeed on any occasion more room and scope for virtue, or better opportunities for exercising some of the noblest dispositions of mind, than when employed in enquiring after truth and duty; and considering the dismal and endless evils which may arise from dishonesty here; how sad it is to have the light that is in us darkness, and to what mazes of error, superstition and destructive conduct, false zeal and misguided judgment may lead us; we cannot be too cautious and diligent in labouring rightly to inform our consciences; or too anxious about obtaining just apprehensions, and freeing ourselves from the power of whatever prejudices, desires or passions tend to warp our minds, and are inconsistent with that coolness, candour, and impartiality which are indispensably necessary qualifications in one who would discover what is *true* and *right*.

Thus have I given what I think the true account of the nature and requisites of *practical virtue*. I observed first of all, that it requires liberty and intelligence. But what I have chiefly insisted on, is, that we characterize as *virtuous* no actions flowing merely from instinctive desires, or from any principle or motive, except a regard to *virtue itself*. This, I have endeavoured to prove, to be the object of the supreme affection and the ultimate end of a *virtuous* † agent *as such*.—Virtue, if I have argued right, must be desired, loved, and practised on its own account *. Nothing is any

† This, in reality, is but little more than maintaining what cannot possibly be denied, that it ought to be the first care and labour of every reasonable being to do all that he thinks to be right, and to abstain from all that he thinks to be wrong; or, that reason, as it is the *principal*, ought to be the *leading* and *governing faculty*, in every reasonable being.

* “ From the distinction between self-love, and the several particular principles or affections in our nature, we may see how good ground there was for the assertion maintained by the several antient schools of philosophy, against the *Epicureans*, namely, that virtue is to be pursued as an end eligible in and for itself. For if there be any principles or affections in the mind of man distinct from self-love; that the things the principles tend towards, or that the objects of these affections are each of them in themselves eligible, to be pursued on its own account, and to be rested in as an end, is implied in the very idea of such principle or affection. They, indeed, asserted

exercise

exercise of it, but what proceeds from an inward relish for it and regard to it, for its own sake. — It has also, I hope, been sufficiently explained, how benevolence and self-love, and the actions to which they excite us, as far as morally good and praise-worthy, are derived from this source. Nothing could be more unreasonable than for any one further to urge, that a regard to the divine will is a principle of virtuous conduct, not reducible to that I have insisted on. Is it not from a sense of duty that virtuous agents, obey the will of God? What merit would there be in obeying it, out of a blind awe or servile dread, unaccompanied with any knowledge or sense of it as *fit* and *becoming*? The true ground then of moral merit in this case, is evidently the influence of moral discernment. Here, as in all other instances, “the ultimate spring of virtuous practice in reasonable beings, is the reasonable faculty itself, the *consideration of duty*, or the *perception of right*”.

“much higher things of virtue, and with very good reason; but to say thus much of it, that it is to be pursued for itself, is to say no more of it than may be truly said of the object of every natural affection whatsoever.” Preface to *Dr. Butler's sermons*, page 32.

C H A P IX.

Of the different Degrees of Virtue and Vice, and the Methods of estimating them ; of Difficulties attending the Practice of Virtue, and the Use of Trial and Discipline in Forming reasonable Beings to Virtue. Of the Place and Influence, the virtuous Principle ought to have amongst our inward Powers, and the Essentials of a good and bad Character.

THroughout the whole of this Treatise, 'till the last chapter, I had considered virtue more generally and abstractly ; its nature, foundation, obligation, principal divisions and branches. I have in that chapter, considered it more particularly in its reference to actual practice, and the minds, capacities, and wills of moral agents ; and I am now to proceed in thus considering it, and to shew, what is meant by the various degrees of it in different actions and characters, and how we compute them ; how far the temper depends upon it, and should

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be formed by it; what influence it should have on our minds and what relation the faculty that perceives it bears to our other powers, and what rank and station it ought to hold amongst them.

What has been already said has, in some measure, prevented me on several of these heads, and therefore the less shall be said concerning them now.

From the preceding chapter, we may easily collect what the true source is, of the various degrees of virtue and vice, we conceive in actions and characters. It is, as there shewn, the reflexion on the *reason of the thing*, or the *right of the case*, and the influence this has upon us, that constitute us *virtuous* and *rewardable*. It is the intention or purpose of virtue itself, that renders an action the object of moral praise and esteem. Now the greater this influence is, or the more explicit, simple, strict, and steady this intention or purpose is, the greater necessarily must we account the virtue, and the more must we admire the action. Hence then, “the degree of regard or disregard, of attachment or want of attachment to truth and rectitude evidenced by actions, is what determines the judgment we make of the degree of moral good and evil in them.”

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“ them.” *External actions* are to be considered as signs of *internal actions*, or of the motives and views of agents. We can, in general, infer the latter from the former with sufficient certainty. But when this happens to be impracticable, we are rendered incapable of pronouncing any thing concerning actions, as virtuous or vicious, admirable or blameable *.

The rule I have now laid down, will be sufficiently explained and proved, by attending to the following facts and observations.

The doing a good action which we have few or small temptations to omit, has little virtue in it ; for the regard to virtue must indeed be very low in that being, who will not be engaged by it to do a good action, which will cost him but little trouble and expence, or which thwarts not sensibly any of his natural desires. — When secular interest, love of fame, curiosity, resentment, or any of our particular propensions conspire with virtue in exciting to an action, it is in the same proportion

* It is plain this must be understood of the *virtue of the agent*, or of *practical*, not *absolute* virtue. It would be endless to add such a caution whenever the sense requires it, nor can it be necessary to a candid and attentive reader, after what has been formerly said.

virtuous, as the apprehension of its rectitude influenced to it, which can never be accounted much, when the action is known to fall in with the bent and humour of our minds and the current of our passions.— When difficulties occur, and secular interest, humour, vanity, or any of our inferior powers clash with virtue, the degree of it is in proportion to the difficulties surmounted, or the number and violence of the passions it overcomes. — When all or several of the different species of virtue unite in engaging to one and the same action, doing it in these circumstances, argues less virtue than if it had been done from the consideration of one of them singly. Thus, any given right action attended with given difficulties, and performed with equal effect, and flowing merely from gratitude, is more virtuous, than if also a regard to publick and private interest, to justice and to veracity had required it, and had concurred in producing it. Hence, therefore, the virtue must be greatest when any single species of it, when every view of what is decent and fit, every decision of our practical judgments, is sufficient to determine us, in opposition to all temptations ; when we are ready to follow *wherever* virtue leads us, and possess such a moral sensibility as to shrink from every *appearance*

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pearance of wrong, and such a horror ^{at} ~~of~~ guilt
as to dread all the *approaches* to it *.

With respect to vicious actions, we may observe in general, that the same circumstances which diminish the virtue of any action, increase the vice in omitting it, and *vice versa*. The commission of an evil to which we have little temptation, though there can be but little virtue in abstaining from it, is yet always very criminal; for it shews very great weakness of the moral principle, or disregard to truth and right. — When an action is not at all reflected upon as evil, there can be no disregard to virtue shewn, and therefore no guilt contracted. — When an action is reflected upon as evil, but the motives to commit it are very strong and urgent, the guilt attending the commission of it is diminished, and all that can be inferred is, not the absolute, but the comparative weakness of the virtuous principle, or its inequality in strength to some other principles. — The more deliberately any wrong action is done, the more wicked it appears to us; because, in this case, reason and conscience have time to gather their whole force, and exert their utmost strength; but nevertheless are

* See Chap. VI. p. 213.

conquered. For this reason a single act of vice, when thus deliberate and wilful, may be the strongest proof of a bad moral state, or a sufficient indication of the whole moral character; which cannot be said of any faults of surprize, to which the violence of sudden passions may sometimes hurry men. — In a word, the greater the evil itself is that a man commits, the more horror is implanted in him against it, the more it contradicts, not only his ideas of rectitude, but his instinctive desires, the greater number of the different kinds of moral obligation it violates, the clearer his perception is of wrong in it, the longer his time for reflexion, and the less the number and strength of his temptations, the greater vice is he chargeable with, and the more flagrant is his guilt. On the other hand, 'tis evident, that by increasing the number and strength of the temptations, and lessening the time for reflexion, the sense of wrong, and the other particulars which I have enumerated, the degree of guilt in an evil action will be diminished, and may thus be reduced so low, as that all disapprobation of the agent shall vanish.

On these things we may make the following remarks.

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First, The difficulties surmounted enhancing the virtue of the character, no otherwise than as they evidence a stricter attachment to righteousness, and more influence of the virtuous principle; it is plain, that they can by no means be *essential to virtue*. As long as the degree of virtuous attachment and regard is the same, it matters not, whether or no any opposition is subdued: The character remains equally worthy and good. The man who meets with less hindrance from his passions and temper, in a course of goodness, than another, may be equally virtuous, if he has in him that affection to goodness, which would engage him, if he had the same opportunities and trials with another, equally to master the same hindrances. Difficulties and inconveniences attending virtue are the means of shewing to others, who cannot see immediately into our hearts, what is in us, or what our moral temper is. And they have also the following effects upon ourselves: They awaken our attention to righteousness and goodness; they call forth the moral principle to decide and exert itself in a manner it could not otherwise have done, and thus become the means of producing stronger virtuous efforts, of increasing the force and dominion of reason with-

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in us, and of improving and confirming virtuous habits*.—These are the uses and advantages of the difficulties and temptations attending virtuous practice; but then it must be acknowledged, that, in some respects, they are likewise the causes of very great evils and disadvantages. If they are the means of *improving* virtue, they are also the means of *overwhelming* and *ruining* it. If they are the very things which constitute moral discipline, they are likewise the very things which hinder it, which produce moral depravity, and give rise to all the corruptions and vices of the world. This is plainly a point which is attended with considerable difficulties. But it would be foreign to my present purpose to enter into the consideration of them. I cannot however omit digressing so far as to observe, that we cannot certainly say, how far the evils and disadvantages I have mentioned, might have been prevented among beings like ourselves, growing

* If the surmounting of difficulties, or subduing opposition, is not what properly *constitutes* the virtue of an agent, it follows, that neither is it what constitutes his *merit* or *rewardableness*; any further than as it may be the means of *improving* his virtue, and, at the same time, of diminishing the *present* happiness attending it, and, consequently, of rendering a *future* reward more necessary.

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up gradually to the use of reason, and, in the mean time, under a necessity of acquiring some habits or other, and of being guided by instinctive principles? Can virtue be *disciplined* and *tried* without being *endangered*? or *endangered* without being *sometimes lost*? Can we acquire any security or confirmation in virtue, till we are habituated to it? And before the habit is acquired, and in the dawn of reason, must there not be the hazard of degenerating?

It may, indeed, be said, that an order of beings may be so made, and, in the beginning of their beings, so circumstanced, as that, while they are advancing towards maturity of reason, and acquiring sufficient views of the nature and excellence of virtue to keep them steady in the practice of it, their inclinations and desires shall always coincide with their duty, and no habits be liable to be contracted that are unfavourable to it. And this, for ought I can see, is possible; and, for this reason, and many others, it must be owned, that the present state of men has a great deal in it, which we are not capable of accounting for. It would in truth be very strange, if it had not, or if any object in nature had not, considering our station and standing in the universe, and the

shortness of our views. — But, be these things as they will, it cannot be improper to observe, that, as the natures and circumstances of men now are, had their desires and their duty always coincided, we might, after much time spent in a practice materially virtuous, been so little established in true virtue, the moral principle might, all the while, have lain so dormant, that, upon a change in our situation, the slightest temptation might have led us astray. But difficulties attending the discharge of our duty, and particular desires and passions drawing us contrary to it, have a tendency, by obliging us to a more anxious, attentive, and constant exercise of virtue, in a peculiar manner, to accelerate our progress in it, and establish our regard to it. And though, at first, the virtuous principle may be scarcely able to turn the balance in its own favour, or but just prevail; yet every repeated instance, in which the inward spring of virtue thus exerts its utmost force, and overcomes opposition, gives new power and vigour to it *: And it has often actually happened, that good men, by a course of virtuous struggles, and long practice of self-denial, by being accustomed to repel temptations, to re-

* See the chapter on *Moral Government in the Analogy.*

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strain appetite, and to contemn dangers and sufferings, when not to be avoided with innocence, have gradually so strengthened and exalted the virtuous principle and established the sovereignty of conscience in themselves, that their difficulties have, in a manner, vanished; all opposition has fallen before them; temptations grown feeble, and virtue become easy and delightful. And let it be well minded, that though this is the period in which the difficulties of such persons are *least*, yet it is also the period in which their virtue is *greatest*. The truth therefore is, that the difficulties a virtuous agent meets with, prove, in general, only the defects of his virtue. Had he a sufficient degree of virtue, he could meet with no difficulties; and the more of it he possesses, the less effect has any given degree of temptation, danger, or interest, in turning him aside from it, or disturbing his resolutions; the more master he is of every tendency and inclination within him; the more superior he is to every foe that can attack him; the less reluctance he feels in the discharge of his duty, and with the more pleasure and ardor he adheres to it.

How unreasonable now must it appear to affirm, that human virtue exceeds that of angels,

gels, because of the opposition it encounters; or to regard it as a question of difficulty, whether the merit of the divine moral character would not be increased, if he had within him some dispositions contrary to goodness? Can the very things, which argue *imperfect virtue*, add to the *perfection* of it? As much superior as is the virtue of angels, so much the less capable must it be of being endangered by any difficulties, or at all affected by causes which would put an entire end to ours. As much higher as their reason is and more perfect their natures, so much the less must every thing weigh with them, when set in opposition to virtue; so much the more sensible they must be, that nothing is of consequence, nothing worth regarding or wishing for, when compared with virtue, or when not to be obtained without violating it. — With respect to the Deity particularly; such is the perfection of his nature, such his discernment of the nature, glory, and obligation of the eternal laws of righteousness, and such his regard to them *, that nothing

* The manner of speaking here used concerning the Deity, is suitable to our common ways of conceiving of his perfections; and it is such as we are under a necessity of using, though not strictly proper. 'Tis generally indeed scarce possible to speak otherwise than improperly of him.

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whatsoever can come in competition with them, or have any tendency to draw him aside from them. His moral excellence consists in such a degree of purity or holiness, as renders him incapable of being *tempted* to evil, and raises him infinitely above all possibility of a bias to deviate from what is right. To suppose such a bias in him, is to suppose him of finite and derived wisdom and goodness, and unspeakably to degrade, instead of raising him in our esteem. If he prevails over it, but only in a limited degree, or so, that some backwardness is left, it will follow, that he is not *completely* good †. If he prevails over it infinitely or perfectly, so that no reluctance remains, and no proportion exists between its influence and the influence

He that approves the sentiments on this subject, which have been delivered in the fifth chapter, may easily correct by them all such forms of expression, whenever they occur.

† What is here said, may be illustrated by substituting *power* in the room of *virtue*, and comparing the opposition the latter may meet with, to that which the former may meet with, in producing any particular effects. The *power* of a being is the same, whether it meets with any opposition or not. The difficulties it finds, in overcoming opposition, prove in general only its weakness: The greater the *power* is, the less difficulty it must find in producing any given effect; and, when supposed infinite, as in the Deity, the very notion of difficulty and opposition becomes a contradiction.

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of moral rectitude ; this will be the same as to have no such biases, or to meet with no opposition. So apparent is it, that the supposition of difficulties attending the perfect goodness of the Deity, or of dispositions in him contrary to rectitude, by which it may at first sight seem, that his moral perfection would be increased, overthrows it. — But, in truth, we know not what we say, when we talk in this manner, or make suppositions of this sort. In a necessary, simple nature there can be no jarring principles. 'Tis supposing a contradiction to suppose, that a being, who is *pure, abstract, original, infinite reason*, can possess any tendencies *repugnant to reason*, or any that do not coincide with it, and resolve themselves into it.

From these observations also it appears, that what has been said of the extenuation of guilt by the strength of temptations, must be understood with some restrictions. For that temptations are *strong*, may argue nothing more, than that our power of resistance is *weak* ; that the spring of virtue, the contrary force in our minds which should repel them, is relaxed or broke. How wretched an excuse then for vice is this, as it is frequently pleaded ? To what do temptations commonly owe their strength, but to strong evil habits the guilty

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guilty person has contracted, and the low, defective, languishing state of his moral powers? And how absurd is it to make the want of virtue a plea for the want of virtue, and to justify guilt by guilt? However, though the idea affixed to the term *great*, when applied to temptations, like the same idea when applied to bodies, be wholly relative, or the result of a comparison between our moral and our other principles; yet there are undoubtedly, *really* different degrees of temptation, and some conceivable by us, which no human virtue could be a match for. And though our liability to be overcome by *any* temptations, arises from the imperfection of human virtue; yet all temptations being far from being in themselves equal, for a person to be overcome by some of them, may argue far less defect of virtue, than to be overcome by others; which is all that is meant by their extenuating guilt. No one, for instance, will say, that a crime committed through fear of immediate tortures and death, implies equal guilt with the same crime committed to avoid some slight inconvenience.

Secondly, We may remark, that what has been said on the subject of the present enquiry, has little or no relation to the question, whether there are any different degrees of ob-
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jective right and wrong in actions, and determines nothing concerning it. Though there were no such different degrees of right and wrong; though these characters were supposed to be absolute and complete, or not at all, in every single object to which they are applied; there would still be the same room left for an infinite variety of degrees of virtue and vice, of merit and guilt *in agents*; and also in *actions*, considered, not in their *absolute* and *abstract* sense, but *relatively* to the intentions and views of reasonable beings, or as *signs* and *effects* of their regard to *absolute virtue* *. 'Tis thus most commonly we consider actions, and this is the true, general source and meaning of the different degrees of commendation and blame, of praise and censure we bestow upon them, and of the various appellations and phrases by which these are signified. And though, sometimes, we speak of actions as being, in the for-

* This distinction has, I believe, been greatly overlooked in the dispute I have here in view; and therefore much confusion must have been the consequence. An ingenious and good writer, in proving the inequality of good and bad actions, in opposition to the *Stoicks*, plainly means their inequality in this last sense; and, one would think, the *Stoicks* could never mean seriously, to assert their equality in any other, than the former of these senses. See Mr. Grove's *System of Moral Philosophy*, p. 262, &c. Vol. i. See also *Cic. Parad.*

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mer sense, more or less right or wrong; this, perhaps, is to be understood and accounted for in much the same manner with the greater and less *ratio's* of mathematicians, or with the different degrees of equality and inequality in quantities, and of similitude and dissimilitude, connexion and repugnancy between objects, which we so frequently speak of.

Thirdly, It may be worth observing, how very deficient Dr. *Hutcheson's* manner of computing the morality of actions is †. For this purpose he gives us this general Canon. “The
“ virtue is as the moment of good produced,
“ diminished, or increased, by the private in-
“ terest concurring with, or opposing it, divid-
“ ed by the ability.” This plainly takes for granted, as all his subsequent rules likewise do, that benevolence is the whole of virtue, and that no action, directed merely to private happiness, or by which any thing is intended, besides some overbalance of publick good, can be, in any degree, virtuous. How exceeding maimed such an idea of virtue is, I have endeavoured to shew. Some of the noblest acts of virtue, and worst acts of wickedness,

† Vid. *Enquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil*, Sect. 3. Art. 11. and Sect. 7. Art. 9.

may be those, which have only ourselves, or the Deity, for their objects; and many relating to our fellow-creatures, which, not being viewed as the means of any moment of good, or of misery, must, according to the foregoing canon and rules, be wholly indifferent. — If, instead of *benevolence*, we substitute, in the rules he has given, *regard to right, or attachment to virtue and duty*, they will, I think, be in the main just and good.

Fourthly, We may further observe, that the reason, which has been sometimes given for the greater amiableness of some good actions than others, namely, their being more free, or less necessary, cannot be just. 'Tis very improper to speak of degrees of *natural* liberty and necessity. Between being the efficient of an effect, and not the efficient; between determining ourselves, and not determining ourselves; between *agency* and its contrary, *inactivity*, there seems no conceivable medium. Every act of volition I am conscious of, if *my* act, must be entirely *mine*, and cannot be more or less *mine*. 'Tis no objection to this, that two or three, or any number of causes, may concur in producing one and the same effect: For then each cause has his own proper share of the effect to produce, which this cause alone
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produces, and which it would be absurd to say, he was helped to produce. — Besides, voluntary determination is not a complex and compounded, but simple effect, which admits not of more than one cause or principle, it being a contradiction to suppose, that the determination of a being may be partly *his*, and partly *some-what else's*.

But waving this; let us turn our thoughts to what will be more easily understood, and consider, that, by the necessity which is said to diminish the merit of good actions, must be meant, not a *natural* (which would take away the whole idea of action and will) but a *moral* necessity, or such as arises from the influence of motives and affections on the mind; or that certainty of determining one way, which may take place upon supposition of certain views, circumstances, and principles of an agent. Now, it is undeniable, that the very greatest necessity of this sort is consistent with, nay, is implied in, the idea of the most perfect and meritorious virtue; and, consequently, can by no means be the thing, that, *of itself*, ever lessens it *. The

* If, when it is said, that a virtuous action is more amiable the less necessary it is, the meaning be, that it will be more amiable the less the agent is urged to it by instinctive desires, or any motives distinct from virtuous
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more confidently we may depend on a being's doing an action, when convinced of its propriety, whatever obstacles may lie in his way; or, morally speaking, the more strong, efficacious, and unconquerable the influence of conscience is within him, the more amiable we must think him. In like manner, the most abandoned and detestable state of wickedness implies the greatest necessity of sinning, and the greatest degree of moral impotence. He is the most vicious man, who is most enslaved by evil habits, or in whom appetite has gained so far the ascendant, and the regard to virtue and duty is so far weakened, that we can, at any time, with certainty foretel, that he will do evil when tempted to it. Let me therefore, by the way, remark, that every idea of liberty must be very erroneous, which makes it inconsistent with the most absolute and complete certainty or necessity of the kind I have now taken notice of, or which supposes it to overthrow all steadiness of character and conduct.

ones; this will be very true. But then, what increases the virtue of the action in this case, is not the mere circumstance of its being less necessary, but its proceeding more from the sole influence of love to virtue; agreeably to what has been observed in the beginning of this chapter.

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The greatest influence of motives that can rationally be conceived, or which it is possible for any one to maintain, without running into the palpable and intolerable absurdity of making them *physical* *efficients* *and* *agents*, can no way affect liberty. And it is, surely, very surprising, that our *most* *willing* determinations should be imagined to have most of the appearance of not proceeding from *ourselves*; or, that what a man does with the fullest consent of his will, with the least reluctance, and the greatest desire and resolution, he should, for this very reason, be suspected not to do *freely*, that is, not *to do at all*.

Again; from the account which has been given of the various degrees of virtue and merit in actions, and of the manner in which we estimate them, we may see why, *when we judge calmly and impartially*, we form much the same judgment of good actions affecting strangers, that we do of those affecting ourselves or friends; and also, why our esteem of an agent is never the less, though he has no opportunities for exerting his virtue, or though his good endeavours may produce effects contrary to those he designed. There is no good account to be given of these facts, if virtue be (what it must be, if we owe our ideas of it to

an implanted sense) no more than a particular kind of agreeable feeling or sensation: For it seems plain upon this supposition, that the sensible pleasure or impression being, in the case I have mentioned, so much magnified or lessened, our conceptions of the degree of virtue must also be proportionably varied: Whereas the account here given, affords us a stable and fixed rule of judging, and shews us the object concerning which we judge, to be real and determinate in itself, and unchangeably the same, whatever our apprehensions of it may be, whatever the impressions are on our minds, and in whatever point of view we contemplate it*. But the notion of virtue I have mentioned, makes it plainly no object of any rational estimate, leaves no fixed standard of it, and implies that all men's apprehensions of it at all times are equally just and true; no man, while he expresses truly what he feels, or the passion and emotion accompanying his observation of a particular action or character, being capable of pronouncing any thing wrong concerning the morality or immorality, the merit or demerit of it†. He

* See Chap. I. Sect. 3.

† “ The distinction of moral good and evil is founded on the pleasure or pain, which results from the view of

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may, 'tis true, err with respect to the quantity of good produced, or the degrees of kind affection influencing the agent; but these are properly, by this scheme itself, as different from *virtue*, as the cause is different from the effect, or as certain tastes are different from the motion and texture of the substances producing them.

I have added above, "when we judge calmly and impartially," because it is too evident to be denied, that the causes I have mentioned, do frequently pervert and mis-lead our judgments. The partiality of persons to ourselves, is always apt to bias our judgments in their favour, and to enhance our good opinion of them; while a stranger, a competitor, an adversary, or a person of a different religious persuasion, can often be hardly allowed to have any thing good in him. In like manner an enterprize, which has proved unsuccessful, or issued in harm instead of good, we cannot

"any sentiment, or character; and as that pleasure or pain cannot be unknown to the person who feels it, it follows, that there is just so much vice or virtue in any character, as every one places in it, and that it is impossible, in this particular, we can ever be mistaken." See *Mr. Hume's Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. iii. p. 154.

easily

easily give those commendations to, which it may really deserve ; as, on the contrary, the happy event or consequences of an undertaking, especially if we ourselves, or those related to us, share in them, have a tendency, by interesting our affections, to engage us to ascribe much greater merit to it than it may truly have. Against these, and the like prejudices and sources of false judgment, by which we are so very liable to be insensibly led astray, we ought carefully to guard ourselves, if we would keep clear of the inconceivable mischiefs arising from party-attachments ; if we would escape the sad effects of following a blind guide, and see things, characters, and men just as they are. We should attend to the situation in which we are placed, and the state and temper of mind in which we view objects, study to make proper allowances for them, and remember that the degree of approbation or blame due to an action, is determined by somewhat more steadfast than private passion, variable impressions, or casual consequences ; and that the true desert of a character is never altered by the mere circumstance of our interest in it, or relation to it.

Having thus explained the general foundation of the different degrees of virtue and vice in actions, and stated the principles and rules by which we judge of them ; it will be useful next, distinctly to consider what is requisite to constitute an agent properly a *virtuous* agent, or to give his *character* this denomination, rather than the contrary.

All beings, who have any idea of moral good, must have some propensity or affection to it, which cannot fail to have *some* effect, and, more or less, to influence their actions and temper. 'Tis not conceivable that a *reasonable* creature should be void of *all* regard to *reason*, and its dictates; that all practices should appear alike to him; that he should want all notion of a distinction between things, as *to be* or *not to be done* ; or that, having such a perception innate and essential to him, and always present with him, it should ever become wholly inefficacious. Nor, strictly speaking, can a reasonable being have any tendencies within him contrary to rectitude. I mean, he can have no aversion to rectitude, considered simply and in itself, or tendency to wrong as wrong, to what is unreasonable and evil as unreasonable and evil.—Both these things seem quite impossible. The former cannot be supposed

posed, without supposing the entire destruction of the intelligent powers of the being; and the very idea of the latter is self-repugnant and contradictory. In other words; there can be no being so corrupt as that the unreasonableness of a thing, that is, his seeing reason *against* a thing, shall be to him a reason *for*, or not a reason *against*, doing it: Or, whose regard to truth and right shall not at least have power enough to turn the scale, when all other things are equal, and be sufficient to render it certain, that he will determine agreeably to them, when he has no temptation to violate them, nothing to divert or mis-lead him, nothing to incline or bias him any other way.

These things then not being possible, and making no part of the idea of an evil character, and of depravity; it should be remembered, that the sources of all vice are our inferior propensities and appetites, which, though in themselves natural, innocent, and useful, cannot but, in our present state, on many occasions, interfere with reason, and remain to influence us, as well when they *cannot* be lawfully gratified, as when they *can*. Hence it comes to pass, that we often actually deviate; and that the reflecting principle is

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found in men, in all degrees of proportion to their lower and instinctive powers and desires. Its natural and rightful place in the mind is that of superiority to all these powers and desires, and of absolute dominion over them. In the nature of it is implied (to speak after Dr. Butler) that it belongs to it, in all cases, to examine, judge, decide, direct, command, and forbid; that it should yield to nothing whatsoever; that it ought to model and superintend our whole lives; and that every motion and thought, every affection and desire, should be subjected constantly and wholly to its inspection and influence. So near and intimate to men is reason, that a deliberate resolution not to be governed by it, is scarcely possible; and that, even when urged by passion and appetite, they can seldom avowedly contradict it, or in any instance break loose from its guidance, without the help of dishonest art and sophistry; without many painful winkings at the light, and hard struggles to evade the force of conviction; without studiously searching for excuses and palliatives, and thus making some shift to throw a cloud before their eyes, to reconcile themselves to the guilty practice, hide its deformity, and deceive themselves into an opinion of its warrantableness or innocence in
their

their circumstances. How plainly may we hence see, how great the force of reason is; how sovereign and unsurmountable it is in its nature; how it adheres to us when we are endeavouring to cast it off; and what sway it will, in some manner or other, have in our minds, do what we will to obscure, abuse, or subvert it.

The essential *pre-eminence* now observed to belong to the reasonable faculty, is what ought chiefly to be attended to, in settling the true idea of human nature *. It proves to us, be-

* The human mind would appear to have little order or consistency in it, were we to consider it as only a system of passions and affections, which are continually drawing us different ways, without any thing at the head of them to govern them, and the strongest of which for the time necessarily determines the conduct. But this is far from being its real state. It has a faculty essential to it, to which every thing within it is subjected, the proper office of which is to reconcile the differences between all our particular affections, to point out to us when and how far every one of them shall or shall not be gratified, and determine which, in all cases of competition, shall give way. This faculty is our *Moral faculty*, and it is therefore the reference of all within us to this, that gives us the true idea of human nature, that unites and harmonizes its various powers, and makes this complex and otherwise confused structure properly *one thing*, one regular and consistent *whole*. This supremacy of the moral faculty, I have observed, is implied in the idea of it; but we have also a demonstration of it from fact: For whereas the *least* violation of this faculty, in compliance with *all our other pow-*

yond contradiction, that its original, proper, and sound state, is that in which this faculty,

ers in conjunction, would give us pain and shame; the *greatest* violation, on the contrary, of our other powers, in compliance with *this*, is approved by us; nay, the more we contradict our other powers in compliance with it, and the greater sacrifice we make of their enjoyments and gratifications to it, the more we are pleased with ourselves, and the higher inward satisfaction and triumph we feel. — See Dr. Butler's Sermons on *Human Nature*, and the *Preface*. I find also Dr. Hutcheson, in his *System of Moral Philosophy*, asserting to the same purpose that our moral faculty, or, as he calls it, the *Moral sense*, is the "directing principle within us, destined to command all our other powers; and that the desire of moral excellence is the supreme determination or affection of our minds, and *different from all our kind affections*." See p. 61, 67, 68, 70, 77, &c. Vol. I.

Though I entirely approve of these sentiments, I cannot help detaining the reader while I make a few remarks, in order to shew him how difficult it is to reconcile them with this writer's other sentiments of virtue. 'Tis much to be wished that he had been more explicit on this subject, and explained himself more particularly. Had he done this, he would, I fancy, either not have asserted these things, or given a different account of the original and nature of moral approbation, and our moral faculty.

If *Moral approbation* be only a kind of *sublimar sensation*, or a *species of mental taste*, it can surely have no influence on our purposes and actions; much less can it have such influence, as to be the supreme and commanding principle within us. The *Moral sense* is properly the determination in our natures to be pleased or displeased with actions proceeding from certain motives. It therefore always supposes some distinct motives and springs, and can never be itself a spring of action. Is it not then wonderful to find this very ingenious and able writer, contrary to what he

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this its distinguishing and pre-eminent part, is indeed, or as to its effect on the life and tem-

had done in his * *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, confounding senses with instincts; and, contrary to what the very idea of the *Moral sense*, as he seems to have explained it, admits of, representing it as a distinct spring of conduct in the mind, talking of its force and efforts within us, its recommending, enjoining, controuling, and governing †, nay, setting it up as the sovereign director of our affections and actions, superior even to Benevolence. This can be consistent and proper on no other supposition, than that our Moral faculty is the Understanding, and that moral approbation implies in it the perception of truth, or the discernment of a real quality of actions.

Again; what is *Moral excellence*? On the principles I am considering, it must mean, either those affections and actions themselves to which we give the denomination of excellent, or that grateful sensation, which, when observed, they are the occasions of in us. — If it means the former, or, in other words, the having and exercising an extensive and ardent benevolence; how can the desire of it be different from benevolence? How can it be, as Dr. Hutcheson says it is ‡ in another order of affections? — If it means the latter, how can it be proper to speak of the desire and love of it? Can the desire of the relish we have for particular objects, as distinct from the desire of the objects themselves, mean any thing, besides the desire of enjoying the pleasures attending it; and can it therefore influence our actions any otherwise than by means of self-love? In short, it must appear, I should think, to every one, very absurd to speak of the desire of Moral excellence, to suppose a calm, immediate determination to *Moral good itself*, and to ascribe a commanding power to the faculty which perceives it, if *Moral good*, or *Moral excellence*, signifies nothing

* See Chap. I.

† See his *Moral Philosophy*.

‡ Ibid. p. 70. — See also the *Preface* by the excellent Dr. Leechman, p. 44, &c.

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per, *pre-eminent*, and all the other powers and principles are obedient to it. — Now *Goodness*

distinct from a *feeling of the heart*, or nothing absolute and immutable and independent of the mind. It is however some indication of the truth on this subject, that those, with whose sentiments it is inconsistent, find themselves led insensibly to write and think of our moral faculty, or the sense of duty and moral excellence, as the ultimate and supreme guide of our actions. Nor can it be easy for any one who will examine this matter, not to feel how unavoidable it is to conceive this to be indeed the case, and how false therefore every account of morality must be that implies the contrary.

Once more, our moral faculty, Dr. *Hutcheson* we find, acknowledges to be the supreme commanding power within us. Consider now, what within us is most likely to be this power. Can there be a higher power in a reasonable being than reason? and is this power a sense? How strange would this seem? — I do not find that *Plato*, and others of the antient moralists, had any notion that the *το ἡγεμονικον* in man, which they insist so much upon, was any thing else than *reason*. *το φυσικὸν δεσποτικόν, τέλει το λογιστικόν*, says *Alcinous de Doctrina Platonis*. Chap. xxviii.

Let me add, that the very question which has been asked, and which naturally arises when we are settling a scheme of life and conduct; “what *ought* to be the end of our deliberation pursuit, private or publick happiness;” or, “which *ought* to give way, (that is, which is it *right* should give way) in case of opposition, the calm selfish, or the calm benevolent affection?” See the *Preface* just quoted, page 45, &c. This question itself, I say, plainly implies, that the idea of *right* in actions is something different from, and independent of the idea of their flowing from kind affections, or having a tendency to universal happiness; for certainly, the meaning of the question cannot be, which will proceed from kind affection, or which has a tendency to promote universal happiness, following our

in men is this state restored and established. 'Tis the power of reflexion raised to its due seat of direction and sovereignty in the mind ; conscience fixed and kept in the throne, and having under its sway all our passions and desires. The least it implies, is some *predominancy* of good affections, and superiority of virtuous principles in us above all others. — *Wickedness*, on the contrary, is the *subversion* of this original and natural state of the mind, or

desires of private or universal happiness. — It also supposes, that the perception of *right* influences our choice ; for otherwise such a question could never be asked with any view to the determination of our choice, nor could the resolution of it have any effect this way. — It supposes finally, that the appeal in all cases is to our moral faculty, as the ultimate judge and determiner of our conduct ; and, that the *regard* to *right*, to *duty*, or to *moral excellence*, is a superior affection within us to *benevolence* ; for it comes in, in cases of interference between self-love and benevolence, to turn the scale in favour of benevolence ; to recommend and order the generous part, or, as Dr. *Hutcheson* speaks *, to make the determination to publick happiness the supreme one in the soul.

Thus then, here, as in other parts of this work, we find an object, "*Moral good*, of unrivaled worth ; of supreme influence ; eternal, divine, all-governing ; perceived by reason ; necessarily loved and desired as soon as perceived ; and the affection to which (including benevolence, but not the same with it) is the chief affection in every good being, and the highest dignity and excellence of every mind."

* Ibid. page 77.

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the prevalency of the lower powers in opposition to the authority of reason. It implies the *inferiority* of good principles to others within a man, a greater attachment to some particular objects than to truth and righteousness, or such a defective regard to virtue, as is consistent with indulging, *in any instance, known guilt*. 'Tis the violent and unnatural state of the mind; the deposition of reason, and the exaltation of appetite; the death of the man, and the triumph of the brute; slavery in opposition to liberty; sickness in opposition to health; and uproar and anarchy in opposition to order and peace.

If then we would know our own characters, and determine to which class of men we belong, the good or the bad; we must compare our regard to everlasting truth and righteousness with our regard to friends, credit, pleasure, and life, our love of God and moral excellence with our love of inferior and sensible objects, the dominion of reason with the force of appetite, and find which *prevail*. Till the rational part gets the victory over the animal part, and the main bent of the heart is turned towards virtue; till the principles of piety and goodness obtain in some degree the supremacy, and the passions have been made to resign their
usurped

usurped power, we are within the confines of vice and danger and misery. — There is too much reason to believe that many deceive themselves by concluding, that since they possess many worthy qualities, and feel the workings of good principles, since they love virtue, and hate vice, and do perhaps much good, they can have little reason to distrust their characters ; not duly considering what is here insisted upon, or that what they ought chiefly to attend to, is the place and degree of these principles in comparison with others ; and that it is not those who hate vice, but those who hate it above pain, dishonour, or any thing whatever ; not those who love virtue, or who possess a *very zealous* regard to it, but those who love it above any thing that can come in competition with it, and possess a *supreme* regard to it, who are truly the virtuous and good. — It is a common observation, that it is the *ruling passion* that denominates the character. The ruling love of power, fame, and distinction, denominates a man *ambitious* ; the ruling love of pleasure, a *man of pleasure* ; of money, a *covetous* man. And, in like manner, the ruling love of God, of our fellow-creatures, and of rectitude and truth, denominates a man *virtuous*.

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It is natural to enquire here, how in particular we may know, that the love of virtue is thus predominant in us, or what are the marks, signs, and effects of that superiority of good affections which has been represented as essential to a good character. In answer to this, it will be proper to observe,

First, That the predominant passion always draws after it the thoughts, furnishes them with their principal employment, and gives a tincture of itself to all the studies, schemes, and deliberations of the mind. What we most love, is that which we think of oftenest, and which engages most of our attention. If then we would know whether virtue and conscience rule within us, we must examine which way the main current of our thoughts runs; what objects present themselves to them with the greatest frequency; what reflexions and desires arise within us most naturally, freely, and unavoidably; what lies upon them with the greatest weight; and what in all our deliberations about what we shall do or undertake, we dwell most upon, take most into consideration, and has the chief influence to determine us.

Particularly, do you then consider, not so much, how gainful will what you are deliberating about be, how will it affect your preferment,

ment, credit, fortune, or ease ; as what, all things considered, do reason and right, equity and honour require of you ; what would you desire and expect that another should do in the same circumstances ; what good may it produce ; how will it appear to you hereafter ; what effect will it have on the divine favour to you ; how does it consist with your interest on the whole, and suit the station and dignity of a being endowed with such faculties, standing in such relations, and having such expectations ? But,

Secondly, That in which this predominancy will principally shew itself, will be *actual practice*, or *the course of the life and conversation*. What stands foremost and highest in our thoughts and hearts, our actions never fail to express. The strength of *inward affections* is always in proportion to their effects on the *external conduct*. When the intellectual and moral principle, therefore, is the *reigning* principle, it excludes every thing irregular and immoral from the behaviour ; all unreasonable courses are forsaken ; the whole of duty is faithfully attended to and discharged ; no ill habits are spared ; no wrong dispositions indulged ; no known obligation willfully and statedly neglected.

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It is above all things necessary to constitute our characters good, that our virtue be not partial; that we conform ourselves to every relation in which we stand, however made known to us; attend not to one duty or part of right conduct to the neglect of others, but regard with equal and sincere zeal every species of duty, and the whole of moral rectitude. He that is just, kind, meek, and humble, but at the same time, a drunkard or intemperate, has no pretence to true virtue, but is really an ill man. The same is true of him who is sober, temperate, and generous, but gives himself up to any kind of impurity or uncleanness; of him who reads, prays, and fasts, is exact in all the external parts of religion, and zealous for truth and piety, but wants candour, gentleness, meekness, veracity, and charity; of him who is chaste, inoffensive, friendly, faithful, and it may be useful and valuable in his station, but wants *piety*, or *neglects any relations higher than those to men*, in which he may have reason to think he stands. The reason of this has been in part already given in the seventh chapter; and we may here add, that an habitual breach of *one* divine law, or retention of *one* favourite failure or bosom-vice, demonstrates, that had the person equal temptations to transgress in all

other instances, he would do it, and become totally abandoned. As long as any passion preserves an ascendancy over us, and remains rebellious and lawless, there is plainly something within us *stronger* than virtue, something that masters and subdues it ; God and conscience have not the throne ; the due balance continues wanting in the mind, and its order and health are not recovered. Till we possess an *equal entire affection* to goodness, we possess none that is *truly acceptable*, or that can be of much account and value. However unblameable a person of the character we are now considering may in several respects be ; with whatever ardor he may apply himself to the practice of some branches of virtue which happen not to lie very cross to his inclinations and temper ; it is obvious, that he is not to be reckoned her faithful votary, and that his heart is at the bottom false to her interests and authority. Were not this the case, would he in *any* instance desert her ? Would he prefer to her the indulgence of any passion or desire, or resign her for any objects and enjoyments ? Such is her dignity and amiableness, that every thing is sordid and contemptible compared with her ; such her nature, that she can admit of no rival. He then loves

her not at all, who loves her not *first*. — A partial regard to rectitude, is inconsistent and absurd. That attachment to it alone is genuine, which has itself merely, its own native obligation and excellence for its object and end, and is unadulterated with the mixture of any foreign indirect motives. And such an attachment will necessarily be directed alike to all the parts and all the instances of it. What comes short of this, is incomplete, unsatisfactory, variable, and capricious. — Be then *consistently* and *thoroughly* good, if you would be so *effectually*. Yield yourself *entirely* and *universally* to the government of conscience, subdue every thing to it, and conquer every adverse passion and inclination, or lay no claim to true virtue, and give up all hope of the happiness in reserve for it.

Every one will see, I do not mean that we must be *perfect*, or lay the stress upon being absolutely free from every failure, or never doing any thing that shall be unwarrantable. This we are indeed quite incapable of. An object or work of any kind may have all its essentials, and be complete in all its parts, when yet it may be very defective and unfinished, and require much more of the hand and labour of its cause. There may be *real* life, at the same
time

time that it admits of great improvement, or is very feeble and languishing. Some weaknesses and infirmities will cleave to the best, and it is impossible at present always to hold our passions under such strict regulation and discipline, as that they shall *never* surprise or hurry us into any thing which our hearts shall disapprove. But whenever this happens, it is essential to the character of a good man, that it is his *greatest* trouble and shame, and that he is put by it upon greater future vigilance. His settled *prevailing* regard in heart and life, is to truth, piety, and goodness ; though unhappily he may be sometimes misled. Conscience has the ascendant ; the sovereignty of reason is established ; and ill-habits are extirpated, tho' not to that degree, that he shall be in no danger of deviating, or that the enemies of his virtue shall never find him off his guard, or gain any advantages over him.

Thirdly, In order to determine, whether the love of virtue is predominant in us, it is proper further to enquire, what degree of *delight* we have in it. That which gives the soul its prevailing cast and bent, and engages its chief pursuit, will be *agreeable* to it. All acts arising from established habits are free, unconstrained and chearful. What our hearts are most set

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upon, will make the principal part of our happiness. What we love and desire most, or have the greatest inward esteem and relish for, must be the source of our greatest pleasures.— Well therefore may he suspect his character, who finds that virtuous exercises, the duties of piety, or the various offices of love and goodness to which he may be called, are distasteful and irksome to him, or such as he would be glad to avoid did he well know how. Virtue is the object of the chief complacency of every good man; the exercise of it is his chief delight; and the consciousness of it gives him his highest joy. He ought to be always ready to undertake whatever it requires from him, never reluctant when convinced in any case of his duty, and never more satisfied or happy than when engaged in performing it.

Some may probably be apt to enquire here, whether the pleasures inseparable from virtue, especially those attending the higher degrees of it, have not a tendency to render it so much the less disinterested, and consequently to debase and sink its value. — I answer, this may indeed be the consequence, as far as it is possible, that the pleasure itself merely attending virtue, can be the motive to the practice of it: But it is scarcely in the power of men (whatever they may think) to be thus refined in
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their pursuits, or really to deceive themselves in this manner. For that only being *the virtue* which any being can justly applaud himself for, or derive pleasure from, which proceeds from a regard to *right* and *duty*, or to which the consideration of these excites him ; it is evidently contradictory to suppose, that the desire of the pleasure attending virtue, or arising from the reflexion upon it, can in any instance be the sole motive to the practice of it. For a person to propose acting thus, is exactly the same as for him to propose acting from *one motive*, in order to have the pleasure of reflecting that he has acted from *another*. — The truth therefore is, that the pleasure attending virtue, instead of *debasing*, necessarily *supposes* it, and always increases or lessens in proportion to the degree of virtue presupposed. The more pious, benevolent and good a man is, the more he must be pleased with himself ; the more satisfaction of mind he must feel. As much greater as his affection and attachment to virtue are, so much the more he must rejoice in it, and so much the happier it must render him. How absurd would it be to assert, that the more pleasure a person takes in beneficence, the less disinterested it must be, and the less merit it must have ? Whereas just the reverse is the truth,

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truth ; for the pleasure being grounded upon and derived from the gratification of the affection of benevolence, the greater degree of it plainly argues only a proportionably greater degree of benevolence.—Such difficulties as these would never have been much regarded, had an observation already made been more considered, namely, “ That pleasure is founded in
 “ desire, and not desire in pleasure ; or that, in
 “ all cases, *enjoyment* and *happiness* are the ef-
 “ *fects*, not the *causes* and *ends* of our affec-
 “ tions.”

There remains another Criterion of a good character, which must not be overlooked ; I mean, a constant endeavour to *improve*. True goodness must be a *growing* thing. All habits by time and exercise gain strength. It is not to be imagined, that *that* person has found principles of virtue in him, who is not concerned about confirming them to the utmost, and obtaining a total victory over all the enemies of his happiness and perfection. He that has tasted of the joys of benevolence and righteousness, cannot but aspire after *more* of them, and grieve under the remains of moral imperfection in his character. He cannot possess so little zeal, as only to desire to keep within the
 bounds

bounds of what is barely innocent or lawful. A person who thinks himself *good enough*, may be sure that he is not *good at all*. When the *love of virtue* becomes the *reigning affection*, it will not be possible for us to satisfy ourselves with any degrees of virtue we possess, or with any acquisitions we can make. What is analogous to this, we find to take place, whenever any of our *lower affections* obtain the ascendancy. Every passion, when it becomes uppermost in the mind, is always finding out new work for the mind, and putting us upon providing new gratifications for it. A man whose *prevailing passion* is the love of *power*, or of *money*, seldom thinks (be his acquisitions what they will) that he has acquired enough; but is continually grasping at somewhat further, and labouring to add to his glory or stores. — This insatiableness which attends the passions, when they pass their natural boundaries, is a sad perversion of a disposition of the mind which is truly noble, and becomes often the occasion of the most insupportable misery. To virtue it ought to be directed. This alone is true gain and true glory. The more aspiring and insatiable we are here, the more amiable and blessed we are rendered. One of the most pitiable spectacles in nature, is a covetous, an

ambitious or voluptuous person, who is ever crying "More, more"; who, for want of contentedness with what he has, loses the whole enjoyment it might afford him, and is tortured perpetually on the rack of wild and restless desire. But how desirable and happy is the state of him, who, in goodness, cannot content himself with present acquisitions; who carefully and anxiously cherishes in himself the high and sacred ambition to grow wiser and better, to become liker to the Deity, and advance continually nearer and nearer to complete perfection?

It would perhaps in some respects be a needless work, as well as not much to our present purpose, to point out particularly what occasion and what room the best have for improvement. It may, however, be worth observing in this place, that as what renders men more or less virtuous, is the greater or less degree of the superiority of the moral principle within them above others; so this principle is capable of increase and advancement without end.

The understanding may be very properly considered, as either *moral* or *speculative*. Our *speculative understanding* is evidently capable of infinite improvement; and therefore our *moral understanding* must be so likewise; for these being only different views of the same faculty,
must

must be inseparably connected, and cannot be conceived not to influence each other. Every improvement of the speculative knowledge of a good being; every advance in the discovery of truth, and addition to the strength and sagacity of his reason, and the extent and clearness of its perceptions, must be attended with views of moral good proportionably more enlarged and extensive; with a more clear and perfect acquaintance with its nature, importance, excellence, and subject-matter; and consequently with a stricter attachment to it, more scope for practising it, and a more sure and invariable direction of the will towards it. This, joined with the growing effects of habit and constant exercise, may by degrees so strengthen and exalt the practical principle of rectitude, as that it shall absorb every other principle, and annihilate every temptation and contrary tendency.

There is therefore no point of *moral* as well as *intellectual* improvement, beyond which we may not go by industry, attention, a due cultivation of our minds, and the help of proper advantages and opportunities. — The contrary may perhaps, with good reason, be said of vice. It is not very easy to conceive of any degree of this, beyond which beings may not also go through a careless neglect of themselves, thro' voluntary

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voluntary depravation, sophistical reasonings, and an obstinate perseverance in evil practices. The *least wickedness* of character supposes something which conquers conscience, and leads a being *habitually* astray ; and the *greatest*, consequently, would imply, that conscience is so far overpowered as to be wholly extirpated, and *all* regard to right and wrong and *all* influence and effect from them destroyed ; which is a pitch of corruption at which, as I have before observed, it is contradictory to suppose that a being can arrive while he remains, in any degree, reasonable and accountable. Within this limit, the force of the higher moral and reflecting powers admits of endlessly various degrees of weakness and inferiority, compared with the other powers of an agent ; and thus may he be, in any degree, more or less corrupt, his nature more or less perverted, and his mind more or less a *Chaos* and a *Hell*.

I might, on this head, further take notice of the extent of our duty ; the various hindrances of our improvement ; the degeneracy into which we are sunk, and the numerous enemies which beset our frail and feeble natures in the present state. Such is the condition of man ; so unfriendly is animal nature at present to the
heavenly

heavenly and divine life ; so great is the disorder vice and folly have introduced into our frame ; and so many are the surprizes to which we are liable ; that, to preserve in any degree the integrity of our characters and peace within ourselves, is difficult. But, to find out and correct the various disorders of our minds ; to establish and maintain a due inward oeconomy and harmony ; to preserve an unspotted purity among all the pollutions of this life ; to destroy all the seeds of envy, pride, ill-will and impatience ; to abide deaf to every thing but reason in the midst of the clamour of the passions, and continue always faithful to our duty, however strongly solicited to desert it, however courted by the world, allured by pleasure, or deterred by fear ; to cultivate all good dispositions, guard against all snares, and clear our breasts of all defilements. — What an arduous *work* is this ? — What constant and unwearied diligence does it call for ? — What room does it give us for improvement ? — And how much of it after all our utmost care and labour must remain undone ?

But with what a deeper sense of imperfection and deficiency must it fill us, to view ourselves in the light and glory of the divine, unspeakable goodness and righteousness ? How
low

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low must this sink us in our own esteem ; and
what a boundless prospect does it set before us,
of greater perfection and higher moral excel-
lence, to which we should aspire ?

We have then the utmost scope for improvement, an everlasting progress before us, and infinite advances to make. With what zeal, therefore, should we set ourselves to that work now, which we must be pursuing for ever, apply ourselves to the practice of true righteousness, and resolve to make it our whole study and ambition, to subject all our inclinations and powers to the *reasonable* and *divine* part of us, to weaken the force of rebellious appetites and habits as much as possible, to grow in a conformity to the divine nature and laws, and cause goodness and love, resignation and uprightness to be effectually wrought into our tempers, and to possess themselves more and more of the whole frame and bent of our souls ?

One thing more on this subject may be proper to be attended to. — It may be asked,
“ whether a due order and balance of the several inferior powers of our natures amongst themselves, ought not to be taken into our idea of a good character, as well as their common subordination to the faculty of reason ? ”

“son?” It will be a sufficient answer to this, to observe, that this subordination of the lower powers infers and implies likewise their due state, measure, and proportion in respect of one another. Though some of them should be stronger than of right they ought to be in comparison with others; yet, if reason governs, the irregularity and disorder which would otherwise follow, will be prevented, and the right balance will by degrees be restored; the defect on the one side will be supplied by a higher principle, and the excess on the other, will, by the same principle, be restrained; so that no harm shall ensue to the character, and nothing criminal discover itself in the life and temper.—It has been elsewhere observed, that, as far as we increase the force and perfection of reason, we diminish the occasion for appetite and instinct. By consequence, then, no inconvenience could possibly arise from any depression of instinct, if reason is proportionably exalted. But in men it is in fact impossible so far to improve this faculty, as that the greatest evils shall not arise from taking away our instincts and passions. They were very wisely and kindly given us to subserve the purposes of our present state; to be the sources of many pleasures to us; to be our sole guides till reason becomes, in some measure,

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sure, capable of taking the direction of us, and, after this, to remedy its defects, to enforce its dictates, and aid us in the execution of them; to give vigour and spirit to our pursuits, and be, as it were, sail and wind to the vessel of life. What we are to study then is, not to eradicate our passions, (which, were it possible, would be pernicious and wicked) but to keep reason vigilant and immoveable at the helm, and to render them more easily governable by it, and more absolutely ministerial to it. When they happen to be in any way unfavourable and perverse, defective or excessive, this will indeed throw difficulties in our way, and expose us to great danger; but it is the office of reason, at all times, to direct and controul them; to supply the needed force when they are too languid; to moderate their effects when too impetuous, and to guard against every threatening danger.

The character and temper of a man, who has naturally the passion of *resentment* strong, and but little compassion to balance it, will certainly degenerate into *malice* and *cruelty*, if he is guided solely by instinctive principles. But, if he is guided by reason and virtue, and these form his character, the exorbitancy of *resentment* will be checked; every thing hard, un-

equal,

equal, injurious, revengeful, or unkind will be excluded from his conduct; his temper will be softened and humanized; the miseries of others will be duly regarded, and every thing done to ease their burdens and encrease their joys, in the same manner, as if the natural feelings of compassion and sympathy had been much stronger. The like may be said of a person whose *self-love* and desire of *distinction* are naturally too high in proportion to his *benevolence*, and who, therefore, unless governed by reason, would become *proud*, *selfish*, and *ambitious*; and in all other cases of the undue adjustment of the passions to one another.— A good man as such, cannot allow any exorbitancy in his affections, or any internal disorder which he is sensible of, or which he can possibly discover and rectify. Neither anger, self-love, the desire of fame, or of ease, or the bodily appetites, can be so powerful, or so deficient, as to render him envious, morose, covetous, luxurious, cowardly, self-neglectful, mean-spirited, or slothful. Piety and virtue consist in the just regulation of the passions and appetites. No better account or definition can be given of them. They signify nothing any farther than they exclude whatever is inconsistent with true worth and

and integrity ; make those who pretend to them better in every capacity of life, (better magistrates, masters, friends, guardians, parents, children, servants, subjects, &c.) and render the peevish, good-natured ; the fierce and overbearing, gentle ; the obstinate, complying ; the haughty, humble ; the narrow and selfish, open and generous ; the voluptuous, temperate ; and the false and deceitful, faithful and sincere. Reason is repugnant to all kinds of unreasonableness and irregularity ; and whatever of this sort may be found in a character, must proceed from its not having obtained sufficient influence and sway. It is essential to it to direct, as far as its dominion extends, the passions to their proper objects ; to confine them to their proper functions and places ; to hinder them from disturbing our own peace, or that of the world ; and, in short, to correct whatever is amiss in the inward man, or inconsistent with its sound and healthful state.

It is scarcely possible to avoid reflecting here, on the flourishing and happy state of the person whose temper and life are formed and governed by reason in the manner I have now described ? What tranquility and bliss must that mind possess whose oppressors and tyrants
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lie vanquished and expiring ; which has regained its health and liberty ; is independent of the world, and conscious of the peculiar care of the Almighty ; where no seditious desire shews itself, and the inferior powers are all harmonious and obedient ; where every tumult is laid, and hope and love, candour, sincerity, fortitude, temperance, benignity, piety, and the whole train of heavenly virtues and graces, shed their influences, and have taken up their residence ? What *beauty*, or what *glory* like that of such a mind ? How well has it been compared * to a well regulated and happy state, victorious over every enemy ; secure from every invasion and insult ; the seat of liberty, righteousness, and peace ; where every member keeps his proper station, and faithfully performs his proper duty ; where faction and discord never appear ; order, tranquillity, harmony, and love prevail, and all unite in cheerful submission to one wise and good legislature ? Is there any thing that deserves our ambition, besides acquiring such a mind ? In what else can the true blessedness and perfection of man consist ? With what *contempt*, as

* This comparison is finely drawn in *Plato's Dialogues* on a Republic. See particularly the conclusion of the fourth and the ninth dialogues.

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well as *pity*, must we think of those, who prefer *shadows and tinsel* to this *first and highest good*; who take great care of the order of their *dress*, their *houses or lands*, while they suffer their *minds* to lie waste; and anxiously study and pursue *external elegance*, but study not to make *themselves* amiable, to cultivate *inward order*, or to acquire a regular and happy state of the heart and affections?

And now, to conclude this chapter, let me observe, that the account it contains of what is necessary to constitute a good character, gives us a very melancholy prospect of the condition of men. True goodness, if this account is just, is by no means so common as we could wish among them; and that indifference and carelessness which we see in far the greatest part of them, must be utterly inconsistent with it. — Multitudes of even those of fair characters in the world, and whose external behaviour, is, in the main, sober, regular, and good, are, I doubt, what we find them, more on account of the peculiar favourableness of their situation, natural temper, and circumstances; or, because they have never happened to be much in the way of being otherwise; than from any genuine and sound principles of virtue established within them, and govern-
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ing their hearts. The bulk of mankind is not composed of the grossly wicked, or of the eminently good ; for, perhaps, both these are almost equally scarce ; but of those who are as far from being *truly good*, as they are from being *very bad* ; of the indolent and unthinking ; the neglecters of God and immortality ; the wearers of the *form* without the *reality* of piety ; of those, in short, who may be blameworthy and guilty, not so much on account of what they *do*, as what they *do not do*.

All, therefore, who are in earnest concerned about their characters and happiness, have the greatest reason to be very careful of themselves, and narrowly to watch and examine their hearts and lives. For it seems much too common for men to think, that less is incumbent on them than is really so ; and to expect, (however unreasonable such an expectation must be in beings, who find it contradicted by all they observe of the course of things) that they may be happy of course under the divine government, without much solicitude or labour of their own. — There is not, indeed, any thing more necessary, than to call upon men to consider seriously, the nature of the present state, the precariousness of their situation

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and the danger they are in of remaining destitute of that virtuous character and temper, which are the necessary qualifications for bliss. There is nothing they want more, than to be warned to save themselves from the prevailing evil of the world ; and to be admonished, frequently, that there is no such thing as escaping future condemnation, or being good and finally happy, “ without being
“ somewhat *more* than men commonly are ;
“ without greater attention, greater zeal,
“ greater piety, purity, and strictness, than
“ there is reason to believe mankind in general possess.”

C H A P. X.

The Account of Morality, given in this Treatise, applied to the Explication and Proof of some of the principal Doctrines and Facts of Natural Religion ; particularly the moral Attributes of God, his moral Government, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments.

BEFORE I enter on the consideration of the subjects to be treated of in this chapter, I shall beg the reader's patience and attention while I recapitulate some of the things which I have said in this treatise ; and, at the same time, endeavour to set before him in one view, and in a more extensive manner than I have yet done, the whole state of the controversy about the *foundation of virtue*.

In all debates and enquiries, 'tis melancholy to think what confusion is occasioned, and what difficulties are created, by the ambiguous senses and careless use of words. Were it possible

fible for us to understand precisely one another's meaning, to observe distinctly the different views we have of things, and the different lights in which we consider them, and to communicate our naked and genuine sentiments to one another, without being under the necessity of having them more or less mistaken, through the various imperfections of language; we should find, that there are few or no subjects, on which we differ near so much as we seem to do, and are commonly apt to imagine. Many questions there are, which have been, for many ages, controverted with great zeal, tho' both sides have in reality all along meant much the same, and been nearly agreed, as far as they had ideas. I say, *as far as they had ideas*; for, it is certain, that there is nothing that the generality of men want more; and that a controversy may become very tedious and voluminous, while neither party has any real and determinate *opinions* about the subject of it; but their zeal and contention are entirely for or against a set of phrases and expressions. This evil will never be cured, till men learn to *think* as well as *talk*, and resolve to proceed from *words* to *things*, to give up their attachment to particular phrases, or settle clear ideas to
them,

them, and study more, in all cases, what is meant than what is said.

A great deal of this perplexity, arising from the ambiguity of words, has attended the subject now before us? and particularly it seems that the word, *foundation*, admits of various senses, which, if not attended to, cannot but produce endless disputes *. For how is it possible, that men should agree in determining what the *foundation* of virtue is, when they understand different things by the term *foundation* itself, and therefore have different ideas of the nature and design of the question? †

Let us then distinctly and accurately consider what we mean, when we enquire what

* The letters which passed between the judicious and candid Dr. *Sharp* and Mrs. *Cockburn*, published in the second volume of the works of the latter, deserve to be consulted here.

† The reader will, perhaps, be ready to wonder, that the definitions and observations which follow, were not introduced into the first section of the first chapter; where the question about the *foundation* of morality is professedly stated and explained, rather than here. But this question, in the sense of it then considered (which is the first of the senses here mentioned, and its most proper and important sense) was in that section so distinctly explained, that there seemed to be no particular occasion for any further explication of terms than was there given. And, when the whole of what is here said has been perused, it will be seen, that it comes in most advantageously after the preceding chapters, and could not have been understood before.

is the "*foundation* of virtue." And let it be premised, that by *virtue* we mean now, *absolute virtue*, or that *rightness*, *propriety*, or *fitness* of certain actions, effects, or events, which all own, in some instances or other, and which can be explained no other way, than by desiring every one to reflect on what, in such instances, he perceives or is conscious of. When now we ask, what the *foundation of virtue* thus understood, is, we may mean, "what " is the *true account* or *reason* that such and " such actions are *right*, or apprehended as " such by us?" — And *but two accounts* of this can possibly be assigned. — It may be said either, that *right* is a species of *sensation*, like taste or colour; and therefore denotes nothing absolutely true of what we apply it to; which lays the foundation of it entirely in the will and good pleasure of the author of our natures. Or, on the other hand, it may be said, that it denotes a *real quality* or *character of actions*, or something *true* of them; something necessary and immutable, and independent of our perceptions, like *equality*, *difference*, *proportion*, or *connexion*; and, therefore, that no other account is to be given, why such and such things are right, than why the natures of things are what they are; why, for example,

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the opposite angles made by the interfection of two right lines are *equal*, or why the divine Being exists, and is absolutely perfect. — It would be extremely unreasonable for any to pretend to want further information here, and to ask, what is the foundation of *truth*? When we have traced a subject to the natures of things, we are, in all cases, necessarily and completely satisfied, and it is, to the last degree, trifling and impertinent to desire any farther account. Would *he* deserve an answer, or could we think him quite in his senses, who should seriously ask, why the whole is *bigger* than a part, or two *different* from twenty? It has been said, that the *divine will* is the foundation of truth, or the original of the natures of things. This is, I think, asserting what no one (whatever he may pretend) can really believe, or clearly understand. It is undoubtedly sacrificing to the single attribute of *will*, all the other divine perfections; and even, under the appearance of magnifying it, subverting it, and taking away the very idea and possibility of it. For upon what is it founded itself? Can there be *power* without *possibles*, or *will* without *objects*, without any thing to be willed? Or can *these*, which *will supposes*, be *dependent* upon it, and *derived* from it?

it? — Some perhaps there may be, who, with me, will further think, that *truth* having a reference to *mind*; *necessary truth*, and the *eternal natures of things*, imply a *necessary, eternal mind*, and *force* us upon the acknowledgment of the *divine, unoriginated, incomprehensible wisdom and intelligence*. — All these things have been considered at large in the first and the fifth chapters.

Again; when we enquire what is the *foundation* of virtue, we may mean, “ what are the “ *primary principles and heads* of virtue; or, the “ *considerations inferring obligation* in particular cases, and rendering particular actions “ *right and fit to be done?* ” Thus, should I enquire why a person *ought* to do such or such a particular thing, or to act in such or such a particular manner, in certain circumstances: It would be proper to reply, because he has received benefits from others; because it conduces to his happiness; or because God commands it. And, in this sense, there will be as many *foundations* of virtue, as there are *first principles, heads, or instances* of it. This, probably, is what those mean by *foundation*, who will allow no other *foundation* of virtue, besides *private happiness*; that is, they mean that nothing obliges, nothing renders actions,

in any circumstances, *fit* to be performed, but some prospect of obtaining private happiness, or avoiding private misery. Should we enquire further of such persons, what it is that renders promoting our own good *right*, and how we are to account for its being the object of our desires and studies; they would, I suppose, in general, be for having recourse to truth and the natures of things; and thus we should be agreed about the foundation of virtue, in the former sense, and differ only about what is treated of in the seventh chapter, or the *subject-matter* of virtue. — This also must necessarily be the meaning of those, who plead for the *will of God* as the only efficient of virtue and obligation, as far as they are not for making it likewise the efficient of all truth. If they will carefully consider, why we ought to do the will of God, or what they mean by the *obligation* to obey God, they will find, that they must either make this to be an immediate *instance* of necessary self-evident truth and duty; or account for it from the power and determination of God to make us happy or miserable, as we obey or disobey him; which would reduce this scheme entirely into that of self-love, and make all the same observations applicable to it.

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We may once more observe, that, by the *foundation* of virtue, may be meant, “the *motives, causes, and reasons*, which engage or attach us to it, and support the practice of it in the world.” This must be what those mean, who are for uniting the several schemes, and represent *the will of God, self-interest, the reasons of things, and the moral sense*, as all distinct and coincident *foundations* of virtue. ’Tis indeed undeniable, that these, with their joint force, carry us to virtue. But, if we keep to the first sense of the term *foundation*, nothing will appear more absurd than to suppose them all, or more than one of the two last of them, to be the true *foundation of virtue*.

He that would obtain a yet more accurate view of this subject, and avoid, as much as possible, being led to any perplexity or confusion, should further particularly attend to the various acceptations of the words *action* and *virtue*, the different senses in which they are used, and the different lights in which the ideas signified by them are considered by different writers, or by the same writer at different times. What I have styled the *virtue of the agent, or practical virtue*, should be considered and treated in a different manner
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from *absolute virtue*, and requires very different things to be said of it. But of these things I have already, in the eighth chapter, given the best account I can.

It remains that I now make some general remarks and observations on the whole of what has been hitherto advanced in this treatise.

What is here of most consequence is, to point out the advantages attending the account I have given of morality in our enquiries into the nature, attributes, and character of the first Cause, and in explaining and proving the general system and facts of *Natural religion*. Several things to this purpose have been already occasionally observed; but it is proper, that they should now be reviewed, and this whole very important subject particularly examined.

Were it certain, that the original of our moral perceptions is an implanted sense, it could no more be concluded from our having such perceptions, that the Deity likewise has them, or any thing analogous to them, than the like conclusion could be made concerning any of our other mental relishes, or even the sensations of sight and hearing. Were there
nothing,

nothing, in the natures and reasons of things, to be a ground of a moral and righteous disposition in the mind of the Deity, or by which we could account for his preferring happiness to misery, and approving goodness, truth, and equity, rather than their contraries, it would be far less easy than it is to ascertain his will and character: nay, I think, it would be utterly inconceivable to us, how he could have any moral character at all. — This may appear, not only from the reasoning used in chapter I. page 75. but also from the following reasoning.

If in respect of *intrinsic* worth, goodness or preferableness, all rules and measures of conduct are alike; if no end can have more value than another, to recommend it to the choice of the Deity; if, in particular, there is nothing, in the natures of things, to be the ground of his approbation of happiness rather than misery, of goodness rather than cruelty, then his nature must be essentially indifferent, alike to all ends; it was always as possible that he should be malevolent as benevolent; there is absolutely no reason, no account to be given of his being one of these, rather than the other; and therefore he cannot be either, or possess any determinate character. For most certainly, whatever he is, he is *necessarily*

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There can be nothing in his nature, which he might have wanted, or which he can be conceived to be deprived of, without a contradiction.

It will be of use, towards illustrating this reasoning, to apply it particularly in the following case: — Suppose then only one body to exist in nature, and let it be conceived to be in motion in any particular direction. Now, either we might certainly determine concerning this body, independently of any further knowledge of it, that it could not have been moving from eternity in this direction without any cause, or we might not. If we might not, 'tis easy to see how exceedingly our evidence for the existence of a first Cause and Maker of the world, is weakened. If we might, it could be only on such principles, and by such reasonings, as the following. Nothing can be or happen, of which there is no account or reason. Whatever has been from eternity without an efficient cause, must have been *necessarily*. But, in the case under consideration, it was from eternity equally possible, that the supposed body should have moved in any other direction; and, consequently, there being no account of its motion from necessity, or the nature of the thing, it must have been moved

moved by some cause, and exclusive of all causality and efficiency, its motion, and even existence, are impossible.

The reasoning in the first case is entirely the same with this; and no one can admit this without admitting that also. If, in the one case, among many directions of motions in themselves alike possible, 'tis absurd to suppose any particular direction to take place without a *director*; it must be equally absurd in the other, amongst many determinations of will and character in themselves indifferent and alike possible, to suppose any particular determination to take place without a *determiner*.

I might go on to observe, that if, *from the natures of things and necessity*, there is no such thing as a rule of conduct to intelligent beings, then there is *necessarily* no such thing; the whole notion of it is impossible and contradictory; there neither is, nor can be any thing to direct the divine actions. — But waving this, which would require too much of our present time and room to explain and defend; I chuse rather to take this occasion to beg those who condemn the argument from necessity, as it has been used by Dr. *Clark*, in demonstrating the being and attributes of God, and who seem to be for rejecting the whole distinction between *necessary* and
contingent

contingent existence, and expressly assert, that a being may exist, without any reason or account of his existence, to consider carefully in what their principles must end, and into what conclusions they lead them.

If any thing may have always been what it now is, without any account or reason, why may not, for instance, the body before supposed have always been in motion without any account or reason; and therefore without any efficient cause of its existence and motion. And if this may be true of one body, why not also of any number of bodies with any relative velocities and directions of motion? Why not of a complete material world disposed into the most regular form and order? The truth is, the distinction between things *necessary* and *contingent*, is the main foundation of our conclusions and reasonings, with respect to a first cause and original of nature. This distinction we perceive intuitively. The particular objects, by the contemplation of which it is suggested to us, force the idea of it, as soon as we consider and compare them, upon our minds. Some things appear to us self-evidently as *effects*, as *precarious* and *arbitrary* in their natures, as indifferent to existence or non-existence, and possible alike to

possess any one of an infinity of different manners of existence. These things then we know certainly to be *derived*, *dependent*, and *produced*. Of this kind are matter and motion; the form and order of the world; all particular sensible things, and finite, actual existences. We do not see more clearly, in any case, that there is such a thing as *productive power*, or a *dependence* of one thing on another, than we do, that these things, and, in general, whatever is imperfect and limited, are *effects*, and require a *cause*. In short, whatever we can *conceive* not to be, 'tis certain *may* not be; and whatever *may* not be, must, if it exists, have had its existence produced by some cause. — On the contrary, some things we see intuitively not to be *effects*, to want no cause, to be underived, self-existent, and unchangeable. To suppose otherwise of them we see to imply a contradiction. We cannot possibly conceive them either not to be, or to be in any respect different from what they are. Of this kind are space and duration, and all abstract truth and possibles. — But it is out of my way to insist on these things.

Let it therefore, in the next place, be considered, as more directly to our present purpose, whether 'tis possible the Deity can be

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good *contrary* to his understanding. We may, I suppose, well take it for granted, that no one will assert this. Now, by the account of our moral ideas which I have opposed, it seems as plain, that, if he is good, he must be so contrary to his understanding, as it is, that for a being to be conscious of doing what he knows to be indifferent, or of employing his power and knowledge in pursuing an end which has nothing in it worthy of his pursuit, is to be conscious of trifling. 'Tis in this case almost unavoidable to think, that acting *without* reason is acting *against* reason. There is at least sufficient truth and weight in this observation to shew us, that it is the grossest disparagement to the perfections of the Deity, to suppose him actuated entirely by a blind, unintelligent inclination, of his possessing which there is no reason to be given; or to conceive him as proceeding invariably in a course of action, which has nothing in it *right*, which he must know perfectly is not *better* than its contrary, and which, consequently, he cannot *really* approve*.

Reasonings of this kind plainly tend to shew us, that if the distinctions of right and wrong,

* See chap. I. sect. 3. p. 75. and also chap. III. p. 121.

of moral good and evil, are nothing in the natures of things; the Deity can be of no character. This indeed is a conclusion which is contradicted by certain fact; by the whole frame and constitution of nature. For his creating at all, and much more final causes, and his acting with so much uniformity and wisdom, imply some dispositions, some inward principle of action, or some character. But this is only saying, that all our observations and the whole course of things, prove the scheme upon which I have been arguing and from whence such a conclusion follows, to be false and absurd *.

But though, in opposition to the precedent reasonings, and the sentiments on which they are founded, *effects* thus undeniably prove the Deity to be of some character; yet it may be doubted, whether, from these alone, we could obtain any undeniable proofs of his being of the particular character of goodness; for it

* “ To suppose God to approve one course of action, or one end preferably to another, which yet his acting at all from design, implies that he does, without supposing somewhat prior in that end to be the ground of the preference, is as inconceivable, as to suppose him to discern an abstract proposition to be true, without supposing somewhat prior in it to be the ground of the discernment.” See *Butler's Analogy*, p. 170. 4th Edit.

seems far from impossible to account for them on other suppositions. An undefining and unintelligent agent cannot produce order and regularity, and therefore where-ever *these* appear, they *demonstrate* design and wisdom in the cause. But it cannot be said in like manner, that a selfish, a capricious, or even a malicious agent, may not produce happiness, nor, consequently, that the appearance of this in an effect demonstrates the goodness of the cause. Let it be granted, as surely it must, that good is greatly prevalent in what we see of the world; that all that comes within our notice of it, shews kind design; and that the primary direction of every object and law of nature, which we are acquainted with, is to happiness, and of nothing to misery; “yet who
“ knows, may some say, what different scenes
“ may have heretofore existed, or may *now*
“ exist in other districts of the universe. An
“ evil being may *sometimes* be the cause of
“ good, just as a good being may of suffer-
“ ings and pain. How little do we see of
“ nature? From what we observe in a *point*
“ and a *moment*, what certain conclusion can
“ we draw concerning what prevails *univer-*
“ *sally* and *eternally*? Concerning a plan per-
“ haps of boundless extent, and which was

“ contrived and is carried on by an infinite
 “ and incomprehensible being, what can be
 “ learned from such superficial and imperfect
 “ observations as we can make of what is next
 “ to nothing of it? Can it be right to esta-
 “ blish a general conclusion on one fact, or to
 “ determine the character and views of a be-
 “ ing, of whom independently of experience we
 “ can know nothing, from a few acts which
 “ will bear several different interpretations?
 “ If we had nothing distinct from effects to
 “ rely on, nothing in necessary truth and rea-
 “ son to argue from, would it not be natural
 “ to entertain doubts and suspicions what
 “ changes may hereafter happen in the world;
 “ whether humour, caprice, or a love of vari-
 “ ety, instead of goodness, may not be the prin-
 “ ciples of actions in the first cause; or whe-
 “ ther *the design of what we now see and feel,*
 “ *may not be to give a keener edge to future*
 “ *pain and disappointment, and thus universal*
 “ *misery appear at last to be ultimately in-*
 “ *tended*?*”

What regard is due to these objections, every
 one may determine as he pleases. I do not
 think them of weight enough to shew that ef-
 fects alone, independently of all arguments from

* *Wisdom the first spring of action in the Deity, by Mr.*
Grove, Chap. I. sect. 9.

moral fitness, can furnish us with no arguments for the goodness of God ; nor would I by any means be understood to assert this.

When we first reflect, that undoubtedly he is of some will and character, and that it is in itself as possible and as credible, that he should be of this particular character as any other ; the consideration after this, that what appears to us of his works has upon it obvious marks of benignity and love, will necessarily incline us to think that he is good, and afford a proof that this is indeed his character. When all things on all sides are equal, and we have no evidence for or against a proposition, any preponderating circumstance on one side will determine our understandings and engage our assent, with an assurance proportionable to its apparent weight. And with respect to the objections and suspicions before-mentioned, it may be justly said, that we are to judge of what we do not see by what we do see, and not the contrary ; and that, consequently, as long as the appearance on the whole of what lies before us of the divine works and government, though comparatively little, is clearly as if happiness was their end, the just and fair conclusion is, that this is indeed the case. Besides, the more extensive we suppose the creation, the greater chance there was against our being cast into

that part of it wherein goodness is so much exerted, if indeed any other principle influences the author of it, to which therefore, on the whole, it must be supposed to be conformable. — Some however (particularly those who entertain dismal ideas of human life, as upon the whole more miserable than happy) are likely, if they think consistently, to be much less influenced by this argument than others. What regard is in reality due to the appearances of evil in the world, and what reason arises from hence, and from the power we seem to have of conceiving how greater degrees of happiness might have been communicated, to suspect that goodness may not be the spring of action, or at least not the sole spring of action in God, are questions of considerable importance, which have been often well discussed, and on which many excellent things have been said. — It deserves particular regard, that the *natural* state of a being is always his *sound* and *good* and *happy* state; that all the corruptions and disorders we observe are plainly *unnatural deviations and excesses*; and that no instance can be produced wherein *ill* as such is the genuine tendency and result of the original constitution of things*.

* It might nevertheless have been observed here, that from effects alone it can at best be only possible to gather

If now, at the same time that the voice of all nature, as far as it comes within our notice, furnishes us with these arguments, it appears to us, that all ends are not the same to an intelligent regard; that there is something intrinsically worthier and better in goodness, veracity, and justice, than in their contraries, something morally different in their natures; our evidence, in this case, for the divine moral attributes, will be increased in the same degree, that we think we have reason to believe these things. And if it appears to us clear and undoubted, that intelligence implies the approbation of beneficence; that the understanding is the power which judges of moral differences; and that

the *present* disposition of the Deity; and that though they demonstrated this to be beneficent, yet we should still want evidences to prove the *stability* of his character, or that he always has been and will for ever continue to be good. For if, as some say, he is what he now is, without any account or ground for it in the natures of things, it is plain he *may* change. Whatever any being is not necessarily that he may cease to be. Whatever qualities he possesses without any reason, he may surely also lose without any reason. Who can think one of these less conceivable than the other?—One would think such considerations as these sufficient to shew, that the principles I have in view will not bear to be argued upon; nor do those who espouse them, find it possible to keep to them uniformly and consistently, but owe their conviction more than they are sensible of, on some of the most important points, to the opposite principles.

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from a necessity in the natures of things, goodness rather than malice, must constitute the disposition and end of every mind in proportion to the degree of its knowledge and perfection; our evidence, on the present point, will become equally clear and undoubted; nor can it be doubted, but that it has been chiefly sentiments of this kind, or the apprehension of *inherent fitness* and *excellence* in goodness and other moral qualities, which has always led men to ascribe them to the Deity.

But, how much inferior evidence in matters the most fundamental and interesting, shall we be forced to take up with, if we reject these principles, or embrace the opinion that all our ideas of *worth* and *virtue*, of *morality* and *excellence*, are factitious and visionary, as having no foundation in truth and reality? — Our approbation of goodness, if derived from intellectual perception, infers *undeniably* and *demonstrably* the goodness of God; but if derived entirely from an arbitrary structure of our minds, is, at best, only one instance among many of good design; and was necessary, supposing the universal plan, whatever it is, to be such as requires that what is here, and in this part of duration, revealed of it, should carry the appearance of benevolence. A few facts and instances,

instances, when we have antecedent evidence from the nature of the subject, may confirm a truth beyond the possibility of doubt ; but can, by no means, give equal satisfaction when we have no such evidence, and experience is our only medium of knowledge and information.

In short, upon the principles defended in this treatise, nothing can be more easy to be ascertained than the moral character of the Deity. If there is a rule of right, arising from the differences and relations of things, and extending as far as all the possible effects of power ; which to perceive is the very same as to approve, and to be conscious of neglecting is the very idea of self condemnation ; which, to the degree it is known, forces the regard and affection of all reasonable beings, and which its own nature constitutes the first, the proper, the universal, supreme, and eternal guide, measure, and motive of all their determinations and actions : If, I say, there is indeed such a rule or law, it follows *demonstrably*, that the *first intelligence*, or the Deity, must be under the direction of it more than any other nature ; as much more, as his understanding is higher, and his wisdom and knowledge more unerring and perfect. He is, in reality, the living independent spring of it. He cannot contradict it, without

without contradicting *himself*. 'Tis a part of the idea of reason, and therefore, in the *self-existent infinite reason*, must be complete and infinite, and of absolute and sovereign influence.

There can therefore be no difficulty in determining what the principle of action is in the Deity. As it is evident, that the seat of *infinite power* must be the seat of *infinite knowledge*; so it appears from hence no less evident, that it must be also the seat of *absolute rectitude*: And these qualities thus implying one another and *essentially one*, complete the idea of Deity, and exhibit him to us in the most awful and glorious light. Amongst the various possible schemes and plans of creation, and ways of ordering the series of events, there is a *best*; and this is the rule and end of the divine conduct; nor is it possible, that seeing this, and all things being equally easy to him, he should deviate from it; or, that the being into whose nature, as the *necessary exemplar and original of all things*, every thing true, right, and good, is ultimately to be resolved, should ever chuse what is contrary to them. To understand perfectly what upon the whole is most fit and good, and to follow it invariably through all duration, thro' the whole extent of the universe, and with re-

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spect to every individual in it, is the highest notion we can frame of *moral excellence*.

Here let us, by the way, consider what we can wish for beyond being under the care of this being ; and with what joy we may reflect, that as certainly as God exists, all is well ; perfect order prevails ; all affairs are under the wisest and kindest direction ; and no event can happen of which it can be truly said, that it would have been on the whole *better* so to have ordered and conducted things as to prevent it ?

But to go on ; the independency, self-sufficiency and complete happiness of God raise him above the possibility of being tempted to what is wrong. 'Tis not conceivable that he should be subject to partial views, mistake, ignorance, passion, selfishness, or any of the causes of evil and depravity of which we have any notion. His nature admits of nothing arbitrary or instinctive ; of no determinations distinct from reason, independent of it, or which cannot be accounted for by it. He is a perfect mind, pure, necessary wisdom and intelligence, in whom nothing can have place that is not coincident with these, much less, any thing inconsistent with them. In an underived being of absolute simplicity, and all whose attributes must be essentially connected, there can be no
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interfering properties. The same necessity and reasons of things cannot be the ground of the approbation and love of rectitude, and of biasses contradictory to it.

Before we quit what we are now upon, it will be proper, least I should be misunderstood, to observe particularly, that whenever I represent *necessity* as the account or ground of the *rectitude* of the Deity, or speak of *goodness* as *essential* to him, it is the *principle* of rectitude or beneficence, or the holy, righteous, and beneficent *disposition* of the divine mind I mean; and not the *actual exercise* of this principle or disposition. No absurdity can be greater than to suppose, that the divine being *acts* by the same kind of necessity by which he *exists*, or that the *exertions* of his power are in the same sense necessary with his *power itself*, or with the *principles* from which they flow, and by which they are directed. All voluntary action is, *by the terms*, free, and implies the *physical possibility* of forbearing it, or doing the contrary. What is meant by this *possibility* is not in the least inconsistent with the utmost *certainty of event*, or with the *impossibility, in another sense*, that the action should be omitted. — It may be *infinitely* more depended upon, that
 God

God will never do wrong, than that the wisest created being will not do what is most destructive to him, without having the least temptation to it. There is in truth, *equal impossibility*, though not the *same kind of impossibility*, that he who is the abstract of all perfection should deviate into imperfection in his conduct, infinite reason act unreasonably, or eternal righteousness, unrighteously; as that infinite knowledge should mistake, infinite power be conquered; or necessary existence cease to exist.— It may be as *really* impossible for a person in his senses, and without any motive urging him to it, to drink poison, as it is for him to prevent the effects of it after drinking it; but who sees not these impossibilities to be totally different in their foundation and meaning? or what good reason can there be against calling the one a *moral*, and the other a *natural impossibility*?

This distinction, which many are so unwilling to acknowledge, and which yet, I think, of great importance, may perhaps be in some measure illustrated by what follows.

Suppose a die or solid, having a million of faces: It may be said to be *certain*, that an agent void of skill will not, the first trial, throw an assigned face of such a die; for the word

certain

certain is often used in a sense much more lax. But that such an agent should throw an assigned face of such a die, a million of times together without once failing, few would scruple to pronounce *impossible*. The *impossibility* however meant in this case, would plainly be very different from an absolute *physical impossibility*; for if it is possible to succeed the first trial, (as it undoubtedly is) it is equally possible to succeed the second, the third, and all the subsequent trials; and consequently, *in this sense of possibility*, 'tis as possible to throw the given face * a million of times together, as the first time. — But further, that a million of dice, each having a million of faces, and thrown together for a million of times successively, should always turn the same faces, will be pronounced yet much more impossible. Nevertheless, it will appear, by the same reasoning with that just used, that there is the same *natural possibility* of this, as of any other event. — If any one thinks what is now said of no weight, and continues yet at a loss about the difference between these two sorts of impossibility, let

* Nay there is an infinity of numbers of trials, in which it is *morally certain* this would actually happen.

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him compare the impossibility that the last mentioned event should happen, with the impossibility of throwing faces which a die has not.

To pursue this exemplification yet further; let us consider that the improbability of throwing any particular face of a die, is always in proportion to the number of faces which it has: When therefore the number of faces is *infinite*; the improbability of the event is *infinite*, or it becomes *certain* it will not happen, and *impossible* that it should happen, in a sense similar to that in which we say, it is *impossible* a wise man should knowingly and without temptation do what will be destructive to him. However, as one face must be thrown, and the given face has the same chance for being thrown with any other, it is *possible* this face may be thrown, and the assigned event happen; in the same manner as a wise man has it *in his power*, knowingly and without temptation to do what will be destructive to him. The certainty that a particular face of an infinite die will not be thrown *twice together*, exceeds infinitely the certainty that it will not be thrown *the first time*; but the certainty that it will not be thrown *perpetually and invariably for an infinity of trials*, is greater than this last mentioned certainty in

the same proportion as the *infiniteth* power of *infinite* is greater than *infinite* *. Yet still the impossibility of event, which all must be sensible of in these cases, is as far from a physical one, as in the simplest cases. Now, he that should in such cases, confound these different kinds of impossibility, certainty, or necessity, would be much more excusable, than he that confounds them, when considering the events depending on the determinations of free beings, and comparing them with those arising from the operation of blind and unintelligent causes. The one admits of endlessly various degrees; the other of none. That necessity by which twice two is not twenty, or a mass of matter does not continue at rest when impelled by another, is, wherever found, always the same, and incapable of the least increase or diminution.

* Supposing n to stand for the infinite number, the probability in the first case will be expressed by $\frac{1}{n}$ in the second case by $\frac{1}{n^2}$ in the last by $\frac{1}{n}$ raised to the infiniteth power, or $\frac{1}{n^n}$.

We might proceed much further, and make the probability to decrease continually through a progression composed of an infinite number of terms, each of which is infinitely less than that immediately preceding it. See the next Note.

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I shall only add on this head, that the necessity or certainty of the eternal conformity of all the divine actions and dispositions to the rules of wisdom and righteousness, may be exemplified by the certainty that an infinite number of dice, each having an infinite number of faces and thrown all together for an infinite number of trials, would not always turn precisely the same faces; which though infallibly true that it will not happen, yet *may* happen, in a sense not very unlike that in which the Deity has a power of deviating from rectitude; or creating, for instance, a miserable world, or of destroying the * world after a supposed promise not to destroy it.

But dismissing this subject; let us now apply

* Or the certainty here meant may infinitely exceed even this, for the probability of an event's happening may be not as $\frac{1}{n^n}$ raised to the n^{th} power, or $\frac{1}{n}$ which is that now mentioned, but as $\frac{1}{n}$ which expresses the probability of throwing an infinitely infinite number of dies in the manner supposed; or it may be as $\frac{1}{n}$ &c. continued infinitely.—
Otherwise thus; the probability of throwing a given face of a die of n faces is $\frac{1}{n}$; of throwing it n times

the account which has been in this treatise, of the nature and subject-matter of morality, to another Question of considerable importance relating to the Deity ; I mean, the Question “ whether all his moral attributes are reducible “ to benevolence, or whether this includes the “ whole of his character.”

It has been shewn that the negative is true of inferior beings, and in general, that virtue is by no means reducible to benevolence. If the observations made to this purpose are just, the question now proposed is at once determined. Absolute and eternal rectitude, or a regard to what is in all cases most fit and righteous, is properly the sole principle of the divine

without failing $\frac{1}{n^n}$; of throwing it n^n times without failing
 $\frac{1}{n^n}$; of throwing it n^n $\&c.$ $\frac{1}{N^n}$ substituting N for n $\&c.$

Those who are acquainted with the doctrine of chances, as taught by mathematicians, will easily understand this.

If any dislike the word *infinite* as used here and above, they may substitute the word *indefinite* in its room, which will answer my purpose as well, and render all more easily conceivable.

The analogy I have here insisted on answers, I think, the end of an illustration with great exactness, and on this account, I hope, I shall be excused, if it should appear to have any thing in it too low for such a subject, or, if I have represented it in a manner which may not be entirely proper.

conduct

conduct, and the ultimate guide of his power. In this *goodness* is first and principally included. But *goodness* and *rectitude*, how far soever they may coincide, are far from being entirely identical. The former results from the latter, and is but a part of it. Which therefore stands first in the divine mind, and which should give way, supposing an interference ever possible, can (one would think) admit of no controversy. For will any person say, that it is not because it is *right*, that the Deity promotes the happiness of his creatures ; or that he would promote it in any *instances*, or in any *manner*, wherein it would be *wrong* to promote it ? — Such reasonings and suppositions will, I know, appear very absurd to some : But it is certain they are not absurd, unless it must be taken for granted, that *right* signifies only conduciveness to *pre-pollent happiness* *, or that nothing but such conduciveness can at any time render one action morally better than another.

It must however be admitted, that the character of God is much more nearly reducible

“ * The *righteousness* and goodness of actions is not the same notion with their *tendency to universal happiness*, or flowing from the desire of it. This latter is the highest species of the former. Our *moral sense* has also other immediate objects of approbation, &c.” Dr. Hutcheson's *system of moral philosophy*, Book ii. Chap. iii. Sect. ii.

to goodness, than that of any inferior beings.—
 What I mean will be better understood, if we make the the supposition of a *solitary being* † *not perfectly happy*, but capable of acquiring happiness for himself, and improving in it; and afterwards consider, into how narrow a compass the obligations of such a being would be brought. Having by the supposition no connexion with any other reasonable being, what could require his attention, besides his own interest? What else could he calmly and deliberately propose to himself as the end which it would be *right* for him constantly to aim at? The exercise of gratitude, benevolence, justice, and veracity, would be impossible to him; and every duty would vanish, except that of prudence, or a wise, steady, and regular pursuit of his own highest good and perfection?

If now we change the supposition, and consider a being, such as the Deity, who is *perfectly happy in himself*, absolutely supreme and independent, and the creator of all things; will it not evidently appear, that he can have nothing to employ his power, and no end to carry

† The same supposition is made but argued upon differently, in an ingenious pamphlet, but very scarce, intitled *Divine Benevolence, or an attempt to prove that the principal end of the divine providence and government, is the happiness of his creatures*, printed for Noon, 1751.

on, different from the *good of his creatures*? As all the views, studies and endeavours of the *solitary being* we supposed, necessarily terminate in *himself*; the contrary must be true of this being. To him *others* must be all; and the care of their interests, the *due adjustment* of their states among themselves, and the *right administration* of their affairs must comprehend the principles and views of all his actions. As he can have no superior, is self-sufficient, and incapable of having any *private end* to carry on, it is wholly inconceivable, what, besides a disposition to communicate bliss, could engage him *at first* to produce any thing, or what *afterwards* can influence him to continue the exercise of his infinite power and perfections, in preserving and directing the beings he has made, besides some regard to their good, or some reasons taken from their circumstances and wants.

Happiness is an object of essential and eternal value. The fitness of communicating it, gave birth to the creation. It was for this the world was produced, and for this it is continued and governed. Beauty and order, which have been strangely represented as of equal, nay superior value, are chiefly to be regarded as subservient to this, and seem incapable of being proposed as pro-

per and distinct ends of action. How triflingly employed would that being appear to us, who should devote his time and studies to the making of regular forms, and ranging inanimate objects into the most perfect state of order and symmetry, without any further view? What would be the worth or importance of any system of mere matter, however beautifully disposed; or, of an universe in which were displayed the most exquisite workmanship and skill, and the most consummate harmony and proportion of parts, but which, at the same time, had not a single being in it that enjoyed pleasure, or that could perceive its beauty? Such an universe would be equivalent to just nothing *.

But while we thus find it necessary to conclude, that *Goodness* is the principle from which the Deity created, and *Happiness* the end for which he preserves the world, and directs and superintends all its affairs; we ought, in honour to this goodness, never to forget, that it is not a *mere physical propensity*, but a principle founded in *reason*, and guided by *reason*, and essentially *free* in all its operations. Were not this true of it, or were it a blind propensity in the divine nature which has no foundation in

* See wisdom the first spring of action in the Deity, by Mr. Grove.

reason and wisdom, to which these are entirely ministerial, and which from the same natural necessity by which the divine nature is eternal or omnipresent, produces all its effects, we could surely perceive no moral worth or perfection in it, nor esteem it at all an object of gratitude and praise.

Happiness is the end, and the only end conceivable by us, of the divine providence and government : But he pursues this end in subordination to rectitude, and by those methods and ways only, which rectitude requires. *Justice* and *Veracity* are *right* as well as *goodness*, and must also be ascribed to the Deity. — By *justice* here I mean principally *distributive justice*, impartiality and equity in determining the states of all beings, and a constant regard to their different moral qualifications in all the communications of happiness to them. 'Tis this attribute of the Deity we mean, when we speak of his spotless holiness and purity. From hence, arises the everlasting repugnancy of his nature to all immorality, his loving and favouring virtue, and making it the unchangeable law of his creation and the universal ground and condition of happiness under his government.—It would, I think, be a very dangerous error to consider goodness in God as
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unaccompanied with justice, or as undirected by justice in its exercise. *Divine benevolence* (as far as it regards moral and reasonable beings) is a disposition, not to make all indiscriminately happy in any possible way, but to make the *faithful*, the *pious*, the *holy*, and *upright* happy.

That *justice* is not merely a mode of goodness, or an instance of its taking the most effectual method to accomplish its end ; or that the *whole* reason why God favours virtue and punishes vice, is not their contrary effects on the welfare of the world, I have endeavoured particularly to shew in the fourth chapter, where I treated of good and ill-desert *.

Again ; *Veracity* is another principle of rectitude, not reducible to goodness and of great consequence, which directs the actions of

* “ Some men seem to think the only character of the
 “ author of nature to be that of simple, absolute, benevo-
 “ lence. This considered as a principle of action and infinite,
 “ is a disposition to produce the greatest possible happiness
 “ without regard to persons behaviour, otherwise than as
 “ such regard would produce higher degrees of it. And
 “ supposing this to be the only character of God, veracity,
 “ and justice in him, would be nothing but benevolence
 “ conducted by wisdom. Now surely this ought not to
 “ be asserted unless it can be proved, for we should speak
 “ with cautious reverence upon such a subject.” See *But-
 ler’s Analogy*, part I. Chap. iii.

the Deity, and by which all the exertions of his goodness are conducted and regulated.

There is nothing unreasonable in believing it possible, that falshood and deceit may frequently have equal aptitude to produce happiness and obtain the divine ends, with truth and faithfulness. Supposing then this should, in any circumstances of the world, happen, 'tis surely not to be doubted but that God would prefer the latter. If this is denied; if it is indeed true, that, exclusive of consequences, there is nothing to chuse between these, nothing right in the one, or wrong in the other, what can we depend on? How shall we know that God has not actually chose the methods of falshood and general deception? What regard can we pay to any declarations from him, or to any indications of his mind and will? Great must be our perplexity, if we are to wait for a satisfactory solution of such doubts, till we can make out, that such are the circumstances of our state and of the world, that it can never be equally advantageous to us to deceive us; especially, as experience and observation shew us in numberless instances, that an end may be obtained, and often most expeditiously and effectually, by deviating from truth.

But;

But though we are thus to conceive of God as *just* and *true*, as well as *good*; *justice* and *truth*, 'tis manifest, could never engage him to create. They suppose beings actually existing endowed with reason and moral capacities, and express a certain manner of acting towards them, or the methods in which their happiness is to be pursued, and the terms on the performance of which it must be suspended.

It is, besides, rather properer to say, that they *direct*, than that they *limit* the divine goodness; for they are by no means inconsistent with the most unlimited communications of happiness, or the exercise of *everlasting, infinite beneficence*.

It will not be amiss further to observe, tho' there may be no great occasion for it, that, from the manner in which I have all along expressed myself, a careful reader may easily see, that I am guilty of nothing like an inconsistency, in denying that the moral attributes of God are resolvable into benevolence, at the same time that I affirm, happiness to be the end, and, in all probability, the *only* end, for which he created and governs the world. — Happiness is the end of his government; but it is happiness, I have said, in subordination to rectitude: 'Tis the happiness of the

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the *virtuous* and *good*, preferably to that of others: 'Tis happiness obtained, not in any way, but consistently with justice and veracity. In a word; we may admit that goodness comprehends the whole divine moral character, provided we understand by it, a *reasonable, sincere, holy, and just goodness*.

Finally; it is necessary for us, on this occasion, to recollect, that though it be proper, and often unavoidable, to speak of goodness, justice, and veracity, as different attributes of the Deity; yet they are different only as they are different views, instances, effects, or manifestations of one simple, supreme principle or attribute, which includes and governs all; namely, *everlasting wisdom, rectitude, or reason*. These reflexions shall suffice on the character of the Deity.

I shall now proceed, in the same manner, to examine the other principles and facts of Natural religion; and to point out the peculiar evidences for them, arising from the account I have given of the nature and foundation of morals.

In the moral character of God, as it has been just explained and proved, is clearly implied his moral government; or that he requires

quires all his reasonable creatures to practise virtue, and connects with it the effects of his beneficence to them. — Between the actions and characters of reasonable beings there is a real, moral difference. This difference, he who knows all things, must know perfectly and completely. Good actions and good characters he must regard as good. To regard them as good is to *approve* them; and to *approve* them is to *prefer* them, to *will* them, and to be disposed to *favour* them. — Evil actions and evil characters, on the contrary, he perceives as evil; which is to *disapprove* them, and to be disposed to discountenance them. 'Tis contradictory then to think, that the evil and the good are equally the objects of his benevolent regard; and most unreasonable to doubt, whether they will be differently treated by him. — As sure as it is that God knows what virtue and vice are; so sure is it that he delights in the one, and forbids the other; and that he will regulate and measure all his distributions of good, according to the respective degrees of them in his creatures. What is *lovely* and of good desert, he cannot but *love* and distinguish. What is hateful and of ill desert, he cannot but be displeased with and punish. 'Tis self-evident that virtue *ought* to be happier than

than vice; and we may be very confident, that what *ought to be*, the universal, governing mind will take care *shall be*. If the state of the world, and of every individual in it, is determined invariably according to *right*, and this is one principle of *right*, "that all beings should receive according to their works;" 'tis certain, that no events or facts, contradictory to this, can ever take place in the world.

All this will be greatly confirmed and illustrated, if we consider how reasonable it is to think, that it must be acceptable to God, that his intelligent creatures should direct their actions by those rules of goodness, justice, and righteousness, by which he directs his own actions. In truth, it cannot be less necessary, that he should require his *subjects* and *children* to do what is right, than it is that he should *himself* do what is right. The *law of truth* must be the *law of the God of truth*. Those duties which arise from the relations in which he has placed us, it must be his will that we should discharge. Those moral differences and obligations, which have their foundation in his nature, cannot be counteracted without counteracting his nature. And so far as we have contracted habits of vice, so far have we established in our natures a contrariety

trariety to his, and alienated ourselves from the fountain of all perfection and good. What can be plainer than these things? What may we not question, if we can question, whether God is pleased to see his creatures carrying on the same end which he carries on, acting by the same rule, and conforming themselves to the dictates of that reason, of which he is himself the eternal source? Must he not have a particular complacency in those who bear his own image? And is it possible that he should not distinguish them from others? Or is it conceivable that he will permit any to be happy in a course of opposition to him, or to suffer by endeavouring, in the best manner they can, to obey and resemble him?

In short, if there is an intelligent and reasonable Being at the head of all, who made things what they are; if moral good and evil, justice and injustice, are real, immutable things, and not mere names or fancies; if there is a law of righteousness which the Deity regards, and according to which he always acts, and conducts all events; if virtue deserves well, and is essentially *worthy* of encouragement, and vice deserves ill, and is essentially *worthy* of punishment; if these things are true, it must be just as true, that the lots of the virtuous and vicious

vicious will be different; that God is *for* the one, and *against* the other; or, that the administration of the world is strictly moral and righteous.

This conclusion might be further proved, from the consideration of the different effects virtue and vice necessarily have on the state and welfare of the world. Virtue, by the nature of it, tends to promote order and bliss; vice is directly subversive of these. *Goodness*, therefore, joins with *justice* in requiring, that the one should universally and for ever be encouraged under the divine government, and the other discouraged and punished.

Let it now be carefully considered here, that if it should appear, that, in the present world, virtue and vice are not distinguished in the manner, which these observations and reasonings require; the unavoidable consequence must be, that "there is a future state." —How this matter stands, and wherein the force of this inference lies, are points which deserve particular examination; and this is what I shall now enter upon.

On the one hand, it must be granted, that, in general, virtue is the *present* good, and vice the *present* ill of men; and that we see enough

in the present state, without having recourse to any abstract arguments, to satisfy us which of these the Deity favours, and to point out to us the beginnings of a moral government. — But, on the other hand, it is no less evident, that we now perceive *but the beginnings* of such a government; that it is by no means carried to that degree of perfection, to which we have reason to expect it will be carried; and that the rules of distributive justice are far from being universally and strictly kept to. In what falls under our observation of the plan of providence with respect to mankind, there is plainly a preparation for, and a reference or tendency to, somewhat further; and without admitting that there is really somewhat further, it appears, in several respects, broken and unaccountable.

Virtue *tends* to produce much greater happiness than it now actually produces, and vice to produce much greater misery. These contrary tendencies neither do nor can, during the short period of this life, in any instance, produce their full effects: And often they are prevented from taking the effect they might, and generally do take, by many obstacles arising from the wickedness of men, and other causes of a kind plainly temporary, and which cannot

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not be reckoned natural or necessary. How reasonably may we presume, that tendencies thus interrupted and opposed, and yet so inseparable from virtue and vice, and so essential to the constitution of things, will, some time or other, issue in their genuine effects?—They declare to us evidently the sentiments and purpose of him who made the world what it is. And can we think, that these will prove at last vain and ineffectual? Will nature be disappointed in its aim, or has this part of its constitution no meaning, or a false meaning?

Though virtue always tends to happiness, and though it is the nature of it to advance our happiness, and to better our condition, in proportion to the degree in which we possess it; yet such is the state of things here below, that the event frequently proves otherwise. 'Tis impossible to survey the world, or to recollect the history of it, without being convinced of this. There is not the least probability, that all men are constantly, universally, and invariably more or less easy and happy, as they are more or less conscientious and upright. How often has virtue been oppressed and persecuted, while vice has prospered and flourished? Good men may have a disposition to an unreasonable and perplexing scrupulosity, or to

lowness of spirits and melancholy, and by these means may be rendered ignorant of their own characters, and live in perpetual distrust and terror : Or they may entertain false notions of religion and the Deity, which may give them the greatest anxiety and trouble, and take away from them all the joys that would otherwise have attended their goodness. And are such men, or others, who, perhaps, through their parents faults, or those of their education, carry about with them diseased bodies, and languish away life under pain and sickness, or who are harrassed and defamed for their integrity, driven away from all that is dear to them, and obliged to spend their days in a state of constant war with external difficulties, in want, in poverty, or in an *inquisition* ; are these persons, I say, equally happy with many others, who, though not more virtuous, may nevertheless be exempted from all such trials and miseries ? Or, indeed, are they equally happy with many vicious persons, who swim with the current of the world ; comply with its customs ; deny themselves nothing they can procure consistently with a tolerably good name amongst their neighbours ; are cast into the most affluent, external circumstances ; enjoy health and vigour of body, and tempers natu-

rally

rally easy and gay ; live in a state of habitual thoughtlessness about what may happen to them hereafter, or entertain opinions possibly that fill them with presumption and false hopes; and at last die without concern or remorse? Have there *never* been any instances of this kind? Does it *never*, or does it *seldom* happen, that the very honesty of persons subjects them to peculiar difficulties and inconveniencies, at the same time that prevarication and dishonesty make their way to ease, and honour and plenty?

Indeed, all things considered, this world appears fitted rather to be a school for the education and improvement of virtue, than a station of honour and happiness to it ; and the course of human affairs is favourable to it more by training it up and *exercising* it, than by *rewarding* it. Though, in equal circumstances, it has always greatly the advantage over vice, and is alone sufficient to overbalance many and great inconveniencies ; yet it would be very extravagant to pretend, that it is at present completely, and without exception, its own reward and happiness ; that it is alone sufficient to overbalance *all possible* disadvantages and evils of body, mind, and estate ; or that, for example, a man who, by *base* but *private* me-

thods, has secured a good estate, and afterwards enjoys it for many years with moderation, discretion, and credit, has less pleasure than another, who, by his benevolence or integrity, has brought himself to a dungeon or a stake, or who lives in perplexity, labour, self-denial, torture of body, and melancholy of mind. It may, 'tis true, be justly said, that virtue, tho' in the most distressed circumstances, is infinitely preferable to vice in the most prosperous, and that expiring in flames, is to be desired and chosen, rather than the greatest wages of iniquity *. But the meaning of this is not, that virtue, in such circumstances, is more *profitable* than vice, or attended with

* No one can think this assertion in any degree inconsistent or extravagant, who does not hold that virtue is good, and eligible, and obligatory, only as the means of private pleasure, and that nothing else can be an object of desire and preference. Upon this supposition, indeed, the very notion of parting with life, or of resigning an enjoyment or good, to preserve innocence, or for the sake of virtue, would imply a contradiction. For being *obliged* to nothing, and therefore nothing being our *duty*, but that by which we shall obtain some overbalance of pleasure; what would otherwise have been *right* becomes *wrong*, when we are to be, in any measure, on the whole losers by it. So that, on these principles, it would be not *virtue* or *duty*, but *vice* and *guilt*, for a man to consent to give up one hour's life, or the *least* degree of present enjoyment or happiness, to procure the greatest blessings for all mankind, supposing no future state. See chap. VI. page 185, &c.

greater

greater pleasure ; but that it is of *intrinsic* worth, excellence, and obligation ; that it is to be chosen and pursued for itself, independently of its utility ; or that it remains desirable and amiable above all other objects, when stripped of every emolument, and in the greatest degree afflicted and oppressed.

What has been last said leads us to a further observation on the state of virtue and vice in the present world, which deserves particular notice ; and that is, that the most worthy characters are so far, in the present state of things, from *always* enjoying the highest happiness, that they are *sometimes* the greatest sufferers ; and the most vicious the least unhappy. A person who sacrifices his life, rather than renounce his faith, violate his conscience, or betray his country, gives up all possibility of any present reward, and loses the more in proportion as his virtue is more noble and glorious.

But, in the *ordinary course* of life, there are circumstances which sub^ject the best men to pains and sufferings, which all others must be strangers to. The greater their virtue is, the higher ideas they have of virtue, and the more difficult 'tis for them to attain to that degree of it they wish for ; the more anxiety

they feel about the state of their own characters; the more concerned they must be for past mis-carriages ; the more sensible of their own im-perfections ; the more scrupulous and tender their consciences are, and the more susceptible of pain and distress from the smallest deviati-ons and infirmities. For this reason, it may, I believe, be safely said, that the infirmi-ties and failures of the best men often give them more uneasiness, than all the indulged vices and crimes of *some wicked men*. Be this however as it will, it can scarcely be denied with respect to wickedness, that it would very frequently be much better for a man, (I mean, more for his own present peace and quiet) to be tho-roughly wicked than *partially* so. A man who loves virtue without uniformly practising it, who possesses many good dispositions, and is sufficiently convinced of the danger and malig-nity of all vice, to cause him heartily to detest it, and *in some instances*, to avoid it, but not enough to prevent his being, *in other instances*, driven by strong unconquered passions into the commission of it ; such a person must doubtless be very miserable. He possesses neither virtue nor vice enough to give him any rest or ease. He is the seat of a constant intestine war, al-ways full of vexation with himself, and torn
and

and distracted between contending passions and desires. 'Till reason is effectually conquered and subdued, it will be on all occasions endeavouring to regain the throne, and raising insurrections and tumults in the mind. The greater power it retains, where it is not suffered to lead and govern, the greater disturbances it must produce, and the severer torments it must inflict.

'Tis worth adding, that in much the same condition with this now described, is a vicious person, during the first period of his reformation. The pangs of remorse and self-reproach, the lashes and stings of an awakened conscience, and the painful struggles with evil habits and passions yet craving and violent, cannot but for some time give him unspeakable trouble, and prevent his experiencing the peace and happiness naturally resulting from virtue : And if we suppose him taken away from life before he has completed what he has begun and attained a settled virtuous character, it will be true of him, that he has only been the more miserable for his change : And yet, surely, for every thing good in a man, it is fit he should be the better rather than worse.

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If now, on the other hand, we consider the condition of the obstinately and thoroughly vicious, we shall find it to be very different. The more the power of reason within them is weakened, the less troublesome it must prove. The nearer they are to being past feeling, the less they must feel. And, in general, we may observe, that the most wicked endure the least uneasiness from the checks of conscience. They attend the least to moral and religious considerations, are least sensible of shame and infamy, practice most readily and effectually the arts of self-deceit, and thus may escape many of the sharpest miseries ~~and sufferings~~ of vice, which had they been less obdurate, they must have suffered.

With what evidence now do these things point out to us a future state, and prove this life to be connected with another? Shall we, rather than receive this conclusion, retreat to *Atheism*, and deny that a being *perfectly reasonable* governs all things? Shall we ascribe want of power or want of goodness to the Deity? or must we maintain that it does not follow from his being himself righteous and good, that he approves and will support righteousness and goodness, and distinguish between those who do his will, and imitate his goodness,

and those who do not ? If nothing is to be expected beyond this world, at the same time, that in all other instances, infinite wisdom appears in the order of nature, the aspect of human affairs is unaccountable ; no suitable provision is made for many different cases amongst men ; no remarkable manifestation is seen of the divine holiness ; the most noble and excellent of all objects, that on which the welfare of the creation depends, and which raises beings to the nearest resemblance of the Deity, is left without any adequate support ; some of the most vile and abandoned amongst mankind go unpunished, and some of the worthiest pass thro' existence without any peculiar effects of the divine love to them, nay, are sometimes suffered to struggle with the greatest difficulties, and to undergo the hardest fate. Are these things possible under the *Divine* government ? Can it be conceived, that the wisdom and equity of providence should fail only in the article of virtue ? That here, where we should expect the exactest order, there should be really [the least of it ?—But, acknowledge the reference of this scene to a future and infinitely more important scene, and all is clear ; every difficulty is removed, and every irregularity vanishes. A plain and rational account offers itself of all the strange phenomena

phænomena in human life ; and we see, that things could not possibly have been otherwise than we find them.—'Tis of little consequence, how much at any time virtue suffers and vice triumphs *here*, if *hereafter* the one is to be crowned with a *happy immortality*, and the other to be condemned to *misery and death*. Nay, as this world is the whole portion of a vicious man, it may be sometimes proper, that he should be permitted to enjoy it ; and also that, for the contrary reason, a good man should be suffered to endure its pains and calamities ; which may very well happen, at the same time, that God leaves not himself without abundant witness to the reason of our minds and in the *general* course of things, and the frame of our natures, of his perfectly moral and righteous disposition and character.

A moral plan of government must be carried into execution gradually and slowly thro' several successive steps and periods. Before retribution there must be probation and discipline. Rewards and punishments require, that antecedently to them, sufficient time and opportunities should be given to beings to render themselves proper objects of them, to shew what they are, and to form and display their characters ; during which time it is necessary
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that things should be distributed in some measure promiscuously, and one event often happen to the good and the bad. Were every single action, immediately upon being performed, to be followed with its proper and full reward or punishment ; were the present world the stage of vengeance for wickedness, and were goodness always at ease and prosperous in it ; the characters of men could never be formed ; virtue would be rendered interested and mercenary ; some of the most important branches of it could never be practised ; adversity, generally its best friend, would be totally excluded from it ; and all those trials would be removed which are requisite to train it up to due maturity and perfection. Thus, would the whole plan and process of a moral government be destroyed, its purposes and scheme defeated, and all things thrown into confusion. Can we then make those very facts objections to the supposition of a perfect moral government in nature, which, as mankind is constituted, appear so plainly necessary to it, and such as, if we reasoned rightly, we must have before-hand expected ? Should we from present inequalities, draw conclusions subversive of the most evident principles of reason, though we see the constitution of the world
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and the natural tendencies of things to be such as will, if they are allowed proper time and scope for operating, necessarily exclude them, and set all things right? Is it reasonable to give up the wisdom and righteousness of the universal mind, to contradict our clearest notions of things, and to acknowledge errors in the administration of the Deity, notwithstanding innumerable appearances in the frame of the world of his infinite power and perfection, rather than receive a plain, easy, and natural supposition, which is suggested to us in innumerable ways, which mankind in all ages have received, and which is agreeable to all our best sentiments and wishes?

No one would doubt, whether a piece of workmanship or production of art, supposed to be accidentally discovered and entirely new to us, was made for a particular use; provided the plan and structure of it plainly answered to such a use, and the supposition of this use of it explained every thing in it that would otherwise be disproportioned and unaccountable, and made it appear throughout regular and beautiful. What would be more perverse than obstinately to deny that it was intended for such a use; and, in consequence of this, contrary to undeniable marks of the most masterly hand
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and the greatest skill in various parts of it, to maintain it to be the work of some bungling artist, who either had not *knowledge*, or not *power* enough, to make it more perfect ?

Again, how unreasonable would it be to assert, that a particular passage in a book which seemed strange or difficult to us, was *nonsense* or *blasphemy*, when an obvious and natural sense of it offered itself to us, which the whole context in which it stood not only allowed but required, which the turn of the passage itself pointed out to us, and which rendered it of a piece with the wisdom apparent in other parts of the book, and agreeable to what previously we had the best reason to believe concerning the character and abilities of the author ?

I have thought it necessary to observe these things, with a particular view to those who are fearful of allowing any thing * irregular in the present distribution of happiness and misery, from an apprehension that the consequence must be the taking away our evidence for a perfect order in nature, and the wisdom

* I mean what *would be* irregular were this life unrelated to another. 'Tis an obvious truth, which 'tis strange any should overlook, that a thing which is perfectly right and just, when considered in its relations to *the whole* to which it belongs, may be quite otherwise, when considered by itself, or as a detached part

and equity of providence. There would be much more reason than there is for such an apprehension, were effects the *sole* foundation of *all our knowledge* of the Deity. In reality, it would be impossible to know what to believe, or to avoid compleat Atheism, were what some have asserted on this head true.— Thus, should it be asked, why, from a view of what lies before us of the constitution, laws, and order of the divine government, we may not gather what will be hereafter under it, as well as we may in other cases collect what is unknown from what is known ; infer, for instance, the whole meaning of a person from hearing only a part of what he said : Should this, I say, be asked, it would be replied, that in the last case our inference would be founded plainly on a previous acquaintance with the speaker, with language, and the general manner in which men use it to express their sentiments ; that, independent of such acquaintance, supposing we understood the meaning of the particular words we heard, we could not infer any thing from them beyond the ideas they immediately conveyed, or have the least reason to suspect any further ideas or intention in the speaker ; and that in like manner, having no previous acquaintance with the divine nature and government, we can know nothing

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nothing more concerning them than is directly signified to us by what we observe of the state of things about us, there can be no reason to think any order prevails in the creation greater than we at the present moment see, or to conclude that the first cause possesses any powers and qualities in a higher degree than they are actually exhibited to us in what falls under our notice of his works. Nay, as antecedently to experience, we could not frame any notion upon hearing particular articulate sounds, of a speaker, or of any ideas signified by them, or in reality know any thing further than that we were conscious of such and such particular impressions or sensations; so likewise with respect to this visible universe, it might be said, (and much the same * has been said) that being an object *wholly singular* to us, we cannot draw any conclusions from it, or determine any thing concerning the nature, designs, and properties of its *cause*, or even so much as know that it has a *cause*.

This is the upshot of the principles I have in view, and hither, more or less, I think, tend the principles of all who derive our knowledge

* See the *Essay on a particular providence and future state*, in *Mr. Hume's Philosophical Essays*.

of causes and effects *entirely* from experience. — But no difficulties or objections of this kind can have the least effect on one, who doubts not but that an account very different from that on which these difficulties are founded, is to be given of the sentiments and operations of our minds, and that the human understanding, however it may be preceded by sensible impressions, take its rise from them, or be supplied by them with the first *occasions* of exerting itself, yet far transcends them *, is a faculty infinitely superior to all the powers of sense and imagination, and a distinct and most important source of our ideas and sentiments, by means of which we can, independently of experience, demonstrate innumerable truths concerning many objects, of which otherwise we must have been for ever ignorant. — 'Tis the peculiar advantage of the principles I have maintained, and the method of reasoning I have used, that they furnish us with direct and demonstrative proofs of the *truths of natural religion*, and particularly of the *righteousness and goodness of God*; at the same time, that they are not inconsistent with, but, on the contrary, aid and support all reasonings *a posteriori*.

* See Chap. I. Sect. II.

I shall conclude this chapter, with mentioning one further use which may be made of the principles maintained in this treatise. We may learn from them, I think, in the clearest manner, “ the great importance of virtue, and evil “ of vice.” Every thing in the account I have given of morals, has a tendency to teach us this.

I wish I could here obtain the reader’s particular attention, and engage him on this occasion to recollect carefully what virtue and vice are, and to consider the following summary account of the *importance* of the one, and the *evil* of the other.

Virtue is of *intrinsic* value and good desert, and of indispensable obligation ; not the *creature of will*, but *necessary* and *immutable* ; not a *local* or *temporary* thing, but as *antient* and *universal* as the *divine mind* ; not a *mode of sensation*, but *everlasting truth* ; not *dependent on power*, but the *director of all power*. These things it has been the principal design of this treatise to prove. — But further, virtue is the foundation of all honour and esteem, and the source of all beauty, order, and happiness in nature. It is what confers value on all the

other endowments and qualities of a reasonable being, to which they ought to be absolutely subservient, and without which the more eminent they are, the more hideous deformities and the greater curses they become. The use and influence of it are not confined to any one part or stage of our existence, or to any particular situation or circumstances we can be in, but reach through all parts of our beings, and all the periods and circumstances of them. Many of the endowments, talents, and powers we now possess, and of which we are too apt to be proud, will cease entirely with the *present state*; but this will be our ornament and dignity in *every future state* to which we may be removed. *Beauty* and *wit* will die, *learning* will vanish away, and all the *arts of life* be soon forgot; but *virtue* will remain for ever. This unites us to the whole rational creation, and fits us for conversing with any order of superior natures, and for a place in any part of God's works. It procures us the approbation and love of all wise and good beings, and renders them our allies and friends. — But what is of unspeakably greater consequence is, that it makes God our friend, assimilates and unites our minds to his, and engages his almighty power in our defence. — It is of equal weight

and use amongst all superior beings as among us, and of the same authority in all worlds as in this. The further any being is advanced in perfection, and the larger his sphere of power, knowledge, and influence are, the greater is his attachment to it, and the more is he under its direction. — To say no more ; 'tis the law of the whole universe ; it stands first in the estimation of the Deity ; its original is his nature ; and it is the very thing that makes him lovely.

Such is the importance of virtue.—Of what consequence, therefore, is it that we practise it? — There is no argument or motive which is at all fitted to influence a reasonable mind, which does not call us to this. One virtuous disposition of soul is preferable to the greatest natural accomplishments and abilities, and of more value than all the treasures of the world. — If you are wise then, reader, study virtue, and contemn every thing that comes in competition with it. Remember, that nothing else deserves one anxious thought or wish. Remember, that this alone is honour, glory, wealth, and happiness. Secure this, and you secure *every thing*. Lose this, and *all* is lost.

But let us next consider *Vice*. To the same degree that *Virtue* is *important and amiable*,

this is *evil and detestable*. 'Tis of essential malignity and ill-desert, the only real object of censure and blame, and the source of all evils. Other things which are called evils, such as diseases, poverty, losses, and calumny, affect only what is external and foreign to us; but they need not, except we please, disturb our minds, or do the least injury to what is truly *ourselves*. But vice pierces and wounds, disorders and lays waste *ourselves*. It hurts not the *body*, the *reputation*, or *fortune*, but the *man*; and plants anguish, uproar, and death in the soul itself.—Other evils may in the end prove to be benefits to us, but this is eternally and unchangeably evil; the bane of every heart into which it enters; the certain ruin of all who do not in time rescue themselves from its dominion; and the sting and misery in whatever else afflicts us.—'Tis impossible to conceive what it is to set up *our own wills* against *Reason* and the *Divine will*, to violate the order of the world, and depart from that law which governs all things, and by which the Deity acts. There is no object in nature so hideous and monstrous as a reasonable being defiled with guilt, living in contradiction to the remonstrances of his understanding, trampling on the authority of God, and opposing himself to the obligations of truth and righteousness.

But

But nothing is fitted to give us a deeper sense of the dreadful nature of vice, than to consider what would be the consequences, if it became prevalent through the creation, and if all beings were to throw off all regard to right and equity. With what groans and desolation would this fill all nature? Into what a dreadful condition of anarchy and misery, would it convert a fair and happy universe? How soon would it blast the whole beauty of the divine works, and involve them in one universal midnight and ruin?—Now, let it be well observed, that *every instance* of moral evil is a *tendency* to this. It is that *begun* which carried further would issue in it. — We cannot, therefore, indulge one irregular desire or wrong thought, without taking a step towards all that is terrible, without so far doing our part towards defacing the creation, and over-turning all law, order, and bliss.

What we thus, from the idea of vice, may see would be the effects of it, if universally prevalent, we find in some measure verified by actual experience and fact. Into this world we know it has got admission; and what havoc do we see it has made? How has it spread its malignant effects through all nations and lands? 'Tis not, indeed, easy for a benevolent mind to bear the prospect here before it, or to

take a particular view of that flood of disaster and woe, which vice has let in upon the human race.—From hence proceed unnumbered calamities and evils which are continually infesting us, and mingling disappointment, vexation, and bitterness with our enjoyments and comforts. This is the cruel enemy which renders men destructive to men ; which racks the body with pain, and the mind with remorse ; which produces strife, faction, revenge, oppression, and sedition ; which embroils society, kindles the flames of war, and erects inquisitions ; which takes away peace from life, and hope from death ; which brought forth death at first, and has ever since cloathed it with all its terrors ; which arms nature and the God of nature against us ; and against which it has been the business of all ages to find out provisions and securities by various institutions, forms of government, decrees, and laws.

But the effects of vice in the present world, however shocking, are nothing to what we have reason to expect will be its effects hereafter, when the good and the bad shall continue no longer blended, (which is what occasions most of the present inequalities in human affairs) when the natural tendencies of things will be no more interrupted in their operation ;
when

when the moral constitution of the universe will be perfected, and every one receive according to what he deserves. What the wrath will be which will then overtake vice, it may not be possible for us to imagine. When we seriously consider what it is in its nature and tendency, we can hardly have too dreadful apprehensions of the punishment that may follow it, and the loss we may suffer by it; or, be too anxious about extirpating all the remains of it from our tempers and lives, and escaping to as great a distance as possible, from the danger with which it threatens us.

THE CONCLUSION.

I Have now finished my design in this work. VIRTUE has been all along my subject; and I know not how better to close the whole, than by proposing the *following argument* * for the PRACTISE of it, which, I think, deserves the careful consideration of all, but especially of *sceptical* persons. It will, if I mistake not, *demonstrate* that whatever is doubtful, 'tis not so, whether we are obliged, in wisdom and prudence, to study above all things to acquire a virtuous character and temper.

I have in the last chapter given an account of some of the proofs of the principal facts of natural religion, particularly, of a perfect moral government in nature, and a future state of rewards and punishments. A great deal of other evidence there is, which it was out of my way to take any notice of. Above all, the *Christian Revelation* confirms to us whatever we can gather from reason concerning the holiness of the Deity, and the justice and righteousness of his government. It promises *eternal life*, a

* The substance of what will be here said was sent by the Author, some years ago, to the writer of a weekly paper, and published.

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happy immortality to the *virtuous*; and threatens those of a contrary character with the loss of these, with irretrievable destruction, with the *second death*, and *everlasting punishment*. These things, however, I will now suppose the whole evidence we have not sufficient to prove: Nay, I will suppose, that there is a considerable overbalance of evidence *against* them; that, for example, 'tis ten to one but they are false, or that for *one argument* or presumption for them, there are *ten* equally good and strong against them. And this, I should think, is as far as any infidelity can well carry a man. — Now, I assert, that, even on this supposition, “our obligations
“in respect of life and manners will remain
“much the same, or, that still it will be the
“*most foolish conduct* not to conform all our
“actions to the precepts of virtue, and to sacrifice *all present* gratifications, rather than
“deviate from it.”

For, let it be considered what such a chance as this for obtaining such a good and avoiding such danger, is worth. Suppose the value of a given good to a particular person to be truly estimated at a million. An even chance for it will be worth half a million; and a chance the disadvantage of which is as ten to one, will be worth the eleventh part of a million. — Let
then

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then the value of the future reward of virtue be expressed by this sum, and the eleventh part of it will be what a person might reasonably consent to resign for it, though the probability were as ten to one against his obtaining it. † The meaning of which in other words is this. If the

† Any person who has at all considered the doctrine of chances will immediately understand this; and to those that have not, it may not be amiss to give the following explication of it.—In a lottery where there is an equal number of blanks and prizes, and each prize is two pounds, every one will see that the real value of a ticket is one pound, because in giving so much for it, a person will have an equal chance of acquiring the clear gain of one pound, or, which is the same, of winning a prize of 2 *l.*—Now, if we diminish the chance in the same degree that we increase the clear gain that may be acquired, 'tis plain, that the price of a ticket will remain the same; so that when the prize is 3 *l.* or the sum we have the possibility of clearing is double, the chance ought to be one half less; that is, whereas before we had an equal number of chances for us and against us, we ought now to have twice as many against us as for us, or there ought to be two blanks to a prize.—For the same reason, when the prize is 11 *l.* or the clear gain we have a chance for getting is 10 *l.* the number of chances against us ought to be ten times greater than those for us, or there ought to be ten blanks to a prize.—If further, instead of supposing the price of the ticket to continue the same, we suppose the chance to continue the same, (as ten to one, for example, disadvantageous) it will be plain, that in the same proportion that we increase the prize, we also increase the value of the ticket; so that as the former is 11 *l.* or 1,100,000 *l.* the latter is 1 *l.* or 100,000 *l.*—If in the last place, we suppose the prize always the same, the value of a chance for it will always increase or decrease, in exact proportion to its favourableness or unfavourableness.

future

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future reward of virtue is supposed but equal in value to all the good we enjoy here, it will be right, notwithstanding an improbability of ten to one against the reality of it, to give up the eleventh part of this good for it. If we suppose it of eleven times greater value, then it will be right to give up for it the whole happiness of life. — But the future reward of virtue is of *infinitely* greater value than our present lives and enjoyments; for, by the supposition which has been made, it is *eternal life*, a *happy immortality*. Such a chance as we are supposing then for *this*, is worth *infinitely* more than all the good of life, or any thing which it is possible for us now to resign or endure on the account of it.

If, on the other hand, we consider the evil to be avoided, it will in the same manner appear, that though we suppose ten to one against its happening, yet ^{what} saves us from the still remaining danger of it, ^{is worth} on account of ~~its nature~~ its nature and degree, [^] infinitely more than any thing in our power to part with.

Let it be now further considered, that instead of putting the improbability of such a reward for virtue and punishment for vice, hereafter, as I have supposed, at the proportion of ten to one, I might have put it at a hundred, a thousand, or any other number to one, and the same conclusion would have followed.

This

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This whole argument may be thus more concisely represented.

Any given chance for a given good is worth somewhat. The same chance for a good twice as great, is worth twice as much; and when the good becomes infinite, the value of the chance becomes also infinite. — The like is to be said of the avoiding of an evil. So that, in short, *any apprehension* that religion *may* be true, lays us under the same obligation as to practice, as if we were ever so well convinced of its truth; or, the *bare possibility* of such consequences to follow virtue and vice, as religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, teach us to expect, demonstrates a vicious man's choice to be foolish beyond all computation and conception.

The chance there is for a future state of reward to virtue, is, we see, by the lowest calculation, worth more than any sum we can assign; worth more than the happiness of millions of lives, though sure to be enjoyed in the highest perfection. But we have only *one* life to dispose of, and that a short and precarious life, the happiness of which is at best low, uncertain, and unsatisfying; so that indeed the worst that it can be ever incumbent on us to do in the affair before us, is to resign one uncertainty

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certainty for another ; a chance for *one instant more* of very imperfect enjoyment, for a chance for *everlasting* and *ever-increasing happiness and glory*.

Let me add, that though it should be imagined that (through some strange confusion in the affairs of the world, or an extravagant mercy in God) by vice as well as by virtue we may stand a chance for happiness hereafter ; yet, if we will but allow that the one is in any respect a *likelier means* of it than the other, it will still be the greatest madness not, at all adventures and the risque of every thing, to adhere to the one, and avoid the other. For it is evident, that the smallest *improvement* of a chance to obtain a good increases in value as the good increases, and becomes infinite or indefinite, when the good itself is so.

It is not, I think, possible for any one to avoid conviction here, who will not assert that it is *certain* that Christianity is false, and that there is no future state, or that, if there is, virtue gives no better chance for happiness in it than vice. It would be inconsistent in a sceptic to assert this, and it may be presumed that no man in his wits will assert it. Suppose it however asserted ; it would, even in this case, be no very great matter for a man to be so far diffident

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dent of himself, as to use the precaution of living so as that if at last the worst should happen, and his confidence prove vain, he may have nothing to *fear*. But no degree of unbelief, short of what rises so high as this, can acquit a man from the imputation of folly unspeakable, if he is loose and careless in his life, or consents at any time to any wrong action or omission to save any thing he can enjoy in this world, or to obtain any thing that can be offered to him in it.

Indeed, whoever will fairly examine the evidences of religion may, I believe, be as sure as he can of any thing, that 'tis not certain, that there is absolutely *nothing at all* in them, and that they deserve *no regard*.—He that will consider how reasonable it is to presume, that *infinite goodness* will communicate *infinite happiness*, and that the creator of all designs his creatures for such a happiness, by continuing those of them who are qualified for it in being for ever to rise and improve under his eye and care, and that virtuous men if any, have most reason to expect such an effect of his favour : He that will consider the various determinations which have been given our minds in favour of virtue ; the accountableness of our natures ; our unavoidable presaging fears and
hopes ;

hopes ; the malignant and detestable nature of vice as before represented ; the general sentiments of mankind on the subjects of a future state and reckoning ; and that spotless holiness of the Deity, which the sacred writings in so striking a manner assert and display, and some conviction of which naturally forces itself upon every one ; he, I say, who will consider these and many other things which may here be easily recollected, cannot well avoid being led to very anxious apprehensions, as to what may hereafter happen, how awful the displays of divine justice may prove, how greatly we may be concerned in the incomprehensible scheme of providence, how much may depend on what we now are, and how very necessary it is that *by all means* we endeavour to secure ourselves.—That some time or other present inequalities will be set right, and a greater difference be made between the lots of the virtuous and vicious than is now visible, almost every thing within and without us leads us to believe, nor is it easy to find any medium between acknowledging it, and real Atheism : And how dreadful and remarkable the event may prove, what kind and what degree of difference the counsels and ends of the divine government may require, who can be sure ? We see enough in the present state of things,

and have sufficient experience what the government of the world admits of, to alarm our suspicions and fears, and to set us upon considering, with the most serious concern, what greater distinctions between human creatures than we now see are likely in another state to take place, and what greater happiness or misery than we now feel, or can have any ideas of, may await us in that future, endless duration, through which it is at least credible and possible that we are to exist.

But with however little regard some may be ready to treat such considerations, it must surely be past dispute among inquisitive and impartial men, that all the arguments taken together, which have been used to prove natural and revealed religion, produce *some degree* of real evidence, and that, consequently, they lay a sufficient foundation for the preceding reasoning.

To this reasoning it becomes us the more to attend, because it is that which we are continually using in the common course of life; and because it explains to us the principles and grounds upon which we act in almost all our temporal concerns. “It * ought to be forced

* See *Butler's Analogy, Introduction*, page 4, and chap. vi. part II. page 343. the 4th edition.

“ upon

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“ upon the reflexion of sceptical persons, that
 “ such is our nature and condition, that they
 “ necessarily require us in the daily course of
 “ life to act upon evidence much lower than
 “ what is commonly called probable ; and, that
 “ there are numberless instances respecting the
 “ common pursuits of life, where a man
 “ would be thought in a literal sense distract-
 “ ed, who would not act, and with great ap-
 “ plication too, not only on an even chance,
 “ but on much less, and where the probability
 “ was greatly against his succeeding.”

What precautions will men often use against
 the most distant and imaginary dangers ? Why
 will they neglect using an easy and reasonable
 precaution against the *worst* and *greatest* of all
 dangers ?—What eager and restless adventurers
 will they become, what pains will they take,
 and what risques will they run, where there is
 any prospect of acquiring money, power, or
 fame, things in themselves of little value, and
 which to despise would be our greatest dignity
 and happiness ? Why then are men so backward
 to take any pains, or to run any risques, in order
 to obtain blessings of *inestimable worth*, and to
 secure a chance for *eternal* bliss ? How strange

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is it that they should so little care to put themselves in the way to win *this Prize*, and to become adventurers here, where even to fail would be glorious? When will the following truths, so interesting and indisputable, be enough considered by men, and sink deep enough into their hearts; namely, “that by such a course
“as virtue and piety require, we can in general lose *nothing*, but *may* gain *infinitely*; and
“that, on the contrary, by a careless ill-spent
“life we can get *nothing*, or at best (happen
“what will) *next to nothing*, but may lose *infinitely*?”

This brings me to what cannot be omitted in the present argument without doing great injustice to it. The reader has observed, that it has gone upon the supposition, that there is a very great probability against religion and a future retribution, and that virtue requires us to sacrifice to it *all our* present enjoyments and gratifications. The reverse of both these appears in reality to be the truth. There is not only an *equal chance*, but a *great probability* for the truth of religion. There is nothing to be *got* by vice, but the best part of present good is commonly *lost* by it. 'Tis not the *happiness of life* that virtue requires us to give up;

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up ; but our *follies, our diseases, and miseries*.—
What now, according to this state of the case,
must we think of the folly of a sinful choice !
How shocking does it appear ! — Who, that
attends to these things, can forbear crying out
with anguish, “ *Amazing infatuation of man !* ”

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AFTER this Treatise had been printed off, I observed
a *second Edition* advertised in the publick Papers, of
the *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Reli-*
gion, with Alterations and Additions. Upon Perusal of this
Edition, I have found, that the Author has made consider-
able alterations in that very part of his Book, which had
occasioned the Note which I have given in page 318 of
this Treatise. I am obliged, therefore, to desire the
Reader to consider what is said in that Note, as not ap-
plicable to this Author's *present* sentiments ; for he has ve-
ry candidly acknowledged, that he was mistaken when he
asserted, that we have a feeling of Liberty, and that this
feeling is delusive, and that all praise and blame, merit
and demerit, are founded on this delusive feeling. p. 157.

I cannot help however observing, that it seems still in-
cumbent on this Author to shew, how he can consistently
assert, that we have no sense of *Liberty*, at the same time
that he maintains, that we have a sense of *Contingency* in
our actions, or a natural perception of them, as in our
power to cause or prevent. See p. 155, 159. And also
how he can suppose that any *process of reasoning* proving
the doctrine of Necessity, can overbalance the evidence
for the contrary doctrine, arising from *that intuitive per-*
ception

ADVERTISEMENT.

ception and original sense, which he owns we have of *contingency*. p. 153. *compare* p. 267. — I likewise wish he would shew, how his allowing (p. 122, 229, 232.) that we have a self-moving power, and that motives are the *occasions*, not the *causes* of action, is reconcileable with the opinion, that we have no power over our actions. To be free agents; to have a power of self-determination; to have a power over our determinations; and a power to determine otherwise than we do in fact determine; all these are evidently the same. Can those determinations or actions of an agent be *voluntary*, or *proceed from himself*, which *depend not on himself*, and which it is not possible for him to cause or prevent? Nothing would be more contradictory than to assert this.

I must not omit to observe further, with respect to the remark I have made on the sentiments of this Author in a Note in page 35, that he has in this second Edition substituted *sense and perception* in the room of *feeling*, and explained himself so as to make it appear to me uncertain, whether he does not mean by them, in some instances, that very *intellectual discernment*, which I have endeavoured to prove, to be the source of the most important of our ideas.



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